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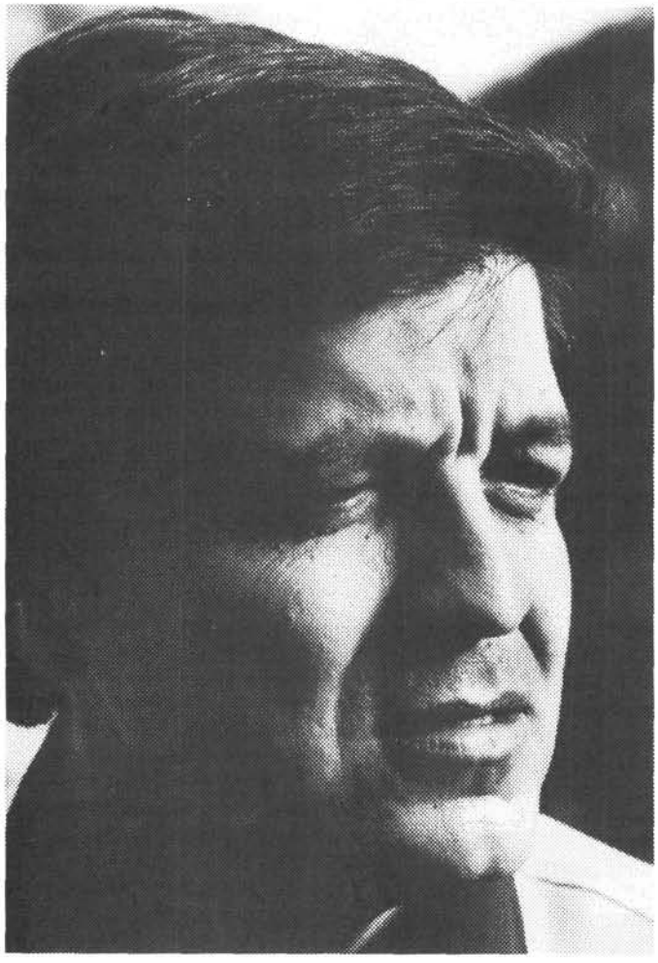

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NEW STATESMAN

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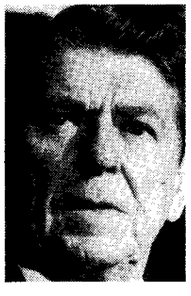
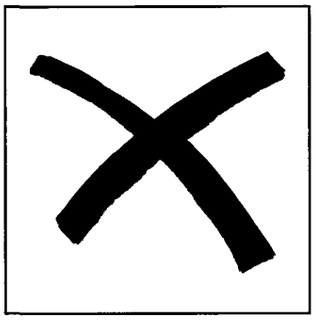


Christopher Hitchens on Reagan's postop blues; Peter Hennessy on the Treasury in the dock; Frances Morrell on the stylish left; how to vote tactically

The tactical vote



IT IS STILL too early for Labour supporters to decide that they should vote tactically in an effort to stop Mrs Thatcher forming a third government. It is not too soon to start giving it serious consideration.

Labour's polls continue generally bad, both those conducted nationally and more particularly those (by *Newsnight* and *Weekend World*) focusing on the marginal seats. These were of course taken before Labour's efforts to focus public attention on the economy got under way: the message that government policies have left the country in the poorest of shapes to withstand the long-term fall in oil revenue, and that manufacturing is now unable to maintain a trade balance, goes to the root of our condition and *must* be understood.

But if it is not? If a general election comes upon us with the polls telling us a story not much improved on the present one? If cynical short-termism and appeal to the pockets of the haves seems to be taking the trick? In such a case, is it not right for those on the left to plan their votes so that they have the best chance of securing a non-Tory government — rather than ploughing on in the name of a principle which may again deliver a government pledged to expunge socialism? The stakes are higher this time: the Tory party will seriously try to fulfil its pledge, and may have some success in doing so.

We want Labour to win. Its commitment, most of all, to 'Freedom and Fairness' gives good expression to the kind of government the country needs — one which promotes individual liberty and enterprise which recognise the social need for co-operation and greater equality. It may yet be able to do so — by succeeding in making its message understood, by forcing the government onto the defensive and then onto the run or — less gloriously — benefitting from an erosion of Tory votes through a rise in the Alliance vote. But it may not.

So we should all watch closely the progress of the campaign now started by Paul Ekins and Jeremy Seabrook and supported by such figures as Michael Young, Frank Field MP and Alan Watkins (news story p5). Ekins and Seabrook will, in the next few weeks, develop then launch a platform which will seek to encourage voters in some 110 marginal constituencies, where either Labour or Alliance have a good — but not certain — prospect of defeating the incumbent Tory, that they should put aside party allegiance and vote for the leading challenger. The plan will need good organisation and money: it may need local opinion polling to get its message across. It will run into the objection that some Alliance votes will go Tory rather than Labour — though enough may go Labour to secure victory. It may need some informal deals between constituencies. But it should be possible.

Neither Labour nor Alliance parties can possibly favour such a strategy formally. When the issue was put to Bryan Gould, Labour's campaign director and shadow Treasury secretary on *Weekend World* last Sunday, he responded that it was 'very much against our short-term and long-term interests to give a helping hand to the Alliance'. He did, however, add that the party would be 'concentrating on the seats where we hope to win'; and that a Labour voter in a no-hope seat might best consult his or her conscience and judgement as to whether or not to vote for a hot-in-pursuit Alliance candidate.

It is difficult to see how the successful application of such a strategy in the face of continuing government lead *would* be against either the short-term or the long-term interests of the Labour Party. Gould spoke of it producing a 'totally unpredictable post-election situation': is that worse than producing a predictable post-election situation in which the Conservatives again form a government? The Alliance parties have not been reduced to insignificance and are not likely to be; Labour under Neil Kinnock has come back strongly from 1983's low point, but is not dominant; the government is not shaky. We cannot expect a union against the right, of the kind produced by the French socialist and communist parties: but where the parties cannot do it, can the people not do it for them?

It is on the ground that people know best why they should get the government out. It is there that they most need a government committed to tackle unemployment; to improve housing; to invest in better education and training; to support and encourage industry; to narrow the divide between wealthy and poor; to provide the real freedom which income and work brings. These are the measures on which most, if not all, anti-Tories could agree. They should translate these feelings into votes, and into effect. Casting the ballot tactically, on the basis of local knowledge, could be the only way to do so.

This should be made clear: such a plan would be for use only if the polls continue to show the same pattern as at present. It is not a principled position, but a strategic one; one which would rather see a victory through compromise than a glorious defeat. Since it *is* a strategy, it depends on circumstances — but if circumstances do not change it should be looked at with great care. It has obvious flaws: but the most flawed result would be a further Thatcher government. □

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BIRMINGHAM DIARY

Birmingham last year felt like a city under siege, trying to find a way out of an appalling economic decline with flashy gimmicks which continually backfired and made everyone feel even more depressed.

The motor race was supposed to add a touch of glamour, making us attractive, so the PR theory went, to the high-powered financiers in the 'new' industries. A pool of labour with engineering skills is no longer a consideration in the location of these firms: much more important are fashionable environments which can attract computer technocrats. Birmingham is losing out to Oxford, Stratford, Cambridge and Bristol, hence the mad dash for an 'excitment' image.

In the event it rained, as it always does in Birmingham, and the races were called off, at a rough cost of half a million pounds. The abiding memory from the event, apart from the deafening noise, was the 20 feet wire mesh fence enclosing council house tenants along the inner ring road.

○

The Olympics farce was much more serious, financially and for our image and morale. The public relations campaign was so intense that the public actually believed we were in with a sporting chance. Coming eighth was a real shock and let everyone know that against the world's capital cities Birmingham was nowhere. Denis Howell, Olympics non-event supremo, blamed it all on London-based financiers and politicians not being interested in the nation's second city. But this was always true and makes one wonder why the late, £4 million (at least) bid was ever made.

Some great stories, though, did filter down about all the junketing. Les Collins, the city official in charge, curiously, of both public relations and community affairs, sent the following electronic message to neighbourhood officers, based in some of the most depressed areas in Britain: 'Cancel meeting. Must fly. Urgent. Rio de Janeiro.'

○

The next wheeze is the International Convention Centre, known locally as Albert's Folly. It is a huge multi-million development in one of the few remaining city centre sites left. According to the hype, conference organisers from around the world will flock to Birmingham to hold their jamborees, forsaking such places as London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, New York, Sydney — in much the same way as the Olympics Committee should have done.

Albert's Folly is so called after Albert Bore, chairman of the council's economic development committee who is desperately promoting it. In a former incarnation as a Bennite Enforcer and leader of the left he railed against the self-same Convention Centre as an offense against the ordinary people of Birmingham. In those days Albert wanted a sports centre and leisure complex for the common man.

When the canny right-wing leader of the council, Dick Knowles, took him under his wing and gave him his committee chairmanship, it was all change. Nor was his the only rapid transition from doctrinaire socialist to political pragmatist. Councillor Lyn Jones used to sit with tenants and housing activists in their campaigns for better housing and fairer rents. As chair of the Housing Committee she has become reviled for trying to reverse a hard-won High Court decision, in favour of tenants, that their tower blocks were health hazards.

It is impossible to explain these metamorphoses just on the personalities of those involved. Rather, they show how leftist rhetoric and bankrupt pragmatism are really the different sides of the same coin. The first has never in practice been able to budge the essential conservatism of the Birmingham working class, or the power of the huge council bureaucracy; the second has never even tried.

○

The left has re-grouped without Albert and now calls itself the Summerfield Group. It has its obligatory list of demands to spend vast sums on minorities and council housing. One of its demands is for the council to rejuvenate manufacturing industry, although it neglects to say how this might be done. As usual, the right has denounced the group as loony lefties, and so it goes on. The new ingredient in the mix is the black movement which has finally won several councillors. Traditionally allied to the right, through an elaborate system of patronage, West Indian and Asian politicians and community leaders are now being courted by the left. They seem to be playing both ends against the middle, or perhaps do not have any strong leanings either way.

They are, however, making the most of local neighbourhood committees (part of the Labour council's weak-kneed attempt to reorganise local government) which have become forums for a new type of sectarian politics. They have few powers, other than to name roads, yet even this had led to strife. In the Ladywood Constituency Committee 'Sardul Marwa Croft' was recently put forward for a new road by an Asian councillor called Sardul Marwa. 'Cult of the Personality' cried the white left, so Mahatma Ghandi Drive was substituted. The Sikhs objected to 'Ghandi' so Mahatma Drive was suggested, until members were informed that Mahatma only meant 'Great Leader' and Great Leader Drive did not make much sense. One hapless Asian councillor innocently proferred Elm Drive, but was instantly howled down by black activists and white leftists alike.

○

The *News On Sunday* team hit Birmingham in November but even this was depressing. It was a poorly attended, lacklustre meeting. The marketing manager tried to whip up enthusiasm about John Pilger's determination to 're-create the lost art of tabloid journalism'. The Equal Opportunities Officer went on and on about the paper's determination to employ minority staff. But then it came to the editorial charter and how one clause insisted that a fundamental principle of the paper, now and forever, would be 'Troops Out'. Apparently, even the paper's lawyers had baulked at the 'specificity' of this clause.

When the panel was asked what this would mean for a committed socialist who applied for a post but did not, like the bulk of Ulster Protestants, believe in a United Ireland or Troops Out, the reply came back: 'They would not get the job.' The decision of the Founders was unanimous on this point, the audience were told, on the grounds that the *Daily Mirror* supported 'Troops Out' and *News On Sunday* could not be less left than the *Mirror*. This reason was so lame that only two conclusions could be drawn from it: either the Founders lack a certain political sophistication, or the whole shebang has been hijacked by Sinn Fein supporters. Both could be true.

○

To really understand the identity crisis of a once great city you need look no further than Birmingham's brash New Street Shopping Centre, recently magically transformed into 'The Pallasades'. The refurbishment of the enclosed shopping precinct, to give it some of the traditional olde worlde charm of Covent Garden, was accomplished with a few fluorescent arches and a bright green open staircase leading nowhere except a car park.

What Pallasades means is a mystery; no such word exists in the dictionary. The nearest thing is palisade — meaning 'a fence of pales or stakes driven firmly in the ground'. Meanwhile, the last of the Victorian facades, barring one in Kings Heath High Street, a local boom area, has just been pulled down — to make way for a brash new shopping precinct.

Howard Sharron

ROGER WODDIS

The Crashed Convoy

(After 'The Lost Legion' by Kipling, who is now out of copyright)

There's a convoy that never was listed,
That carries no colours or crest,
But secretly travelled through Wiltshire
And crashed in defence of the West.
And after two 20-ton lorries
Were unlucky to skid on the ice,
The donkeys in charge of the lions
Were suddenly quiet as mice.

And then they produced Roger Freeman,
The voice of the Min. of Defence,
Who said, 'There's no risk to the public —
You know what we're doing makes sense.'
And some didn't seem to be worried,
And some went to bed with a pill,
And some dared to question the convoy
That crashed on the road to Dean Hill.

Then a health to the lads who protect us
From the dangerous devils abroad,
Though we know in our moments of reason
The threat is a bit of a fraud.
Yes, a health to the nuclear gamblers,
The masters of Russian roulette,
Who says as they play with the trigger,
'Don't panic — it's not happened yet.'

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The Get Maggie Out Vote

AN ORGANISATION dedicated to urging voters in marginal seats to use the 'tactical vote' to ensure the defeat of Tory candidates will be launched next month. the brainchild of alternative economist Paul Ekins and writer Jeremy Seabrook, it looks like a serious effort which deserves attention as polls continue to show that while the government leads, *it is opposed by a majority of some 60 per cent of the population*.

More pointedly, polls by *Newsnight* and *Weekend World* over the weekend showed Labour and Alliance parties lagging in the marginals they have to win to ensure the government's defeat. The *WW* poll, projecting a Tory majority of some 100 seats, was instantly decried by Bryan Gould, Labour's campaign manager, as incredible, in the face of a same-day poll in Greenwich which put Labour at 60 per cent, 35 per cent up on the Tories.

The Ekins-Seabrook strategy is to set up a national steering committee of the great and the good, of whom the founding members will be of no party. They have already attracted Dr Roy Shaw, Gerald Priestland, writer and broadcaster, and Max Nicholson, the well-known ecologist. They have, says Ekins, a three-point strategy:

- to secure a 'one-nation' government;
- to secure a government more committed to the poor and disadvantaged;
- to secure a fairer representation than this government provides.

They have selected some 110 seats (55 Labour, 50 Alliance, 5 other) on which to concentrate: they have ignored those marginals which are almost certain to go Labour on any kind of swing. They want to spread the belief that local people *can* determine the national outcome: 'We don't,' says Seabrook, 'like the idea of the election being just for one seat — Television Central'.

They are not alone. Michael Young, of the Institute of Community Studies, is understood to be about to launch a Tactical Voting Unit (he is presently in Africa) which may dovetail with the Ekins/Seabrook campaign. Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, advised tactical voting in his column in the *Catholic Herald* last week: he told the *NS* that 'it is crucial that voters have local information, so that they can make the proper choice. They can then, in Bagehot's phrase, become the "effective part of the constitution".' Alan Watkins, the *Observer* columnist, used his Sunday piece to give the plan a boost, ending with the ringing cry that 'The object is to remove Mrs Thatcher. It is as well to be open about that at the start'. Yes indeed. ●

Harmonious selection

DAVID OWEN'S insistence that the SDP and Liberal parties should remain separate has been dealt a blow by the way local Alliance parties have co-operated in selecting candidates to fight the next election. Owen has consistently maintained that the two parties should keep their selections separate. But in no fewer than 120 constituencies have joint selection meetings been held.

In 76 of these, the selections were open: that is, both Liberal and SDP members participated and could choose a candidate from either party. In another 44 seats, all SDP allocated seats, closed meetings were held: Liberals were able to vote alongside SDP members, but their choice was limited to a short-list of SDP hopefuls.

Details of the selection outcomes have been made available to the *NS*. They show that in the 85 seats where Alliance candidates have the best chance of winning — where they came within 20 points of victory in 1983 — joint selection meetings were more common than in the rest of the country. Twelve open selection meetings were held. They resulted in three target seats changing hands: Leeds North-West and Somerset & Frome will now be fought by the Liberals, while Salisbury will now be contested by the SDP. In another open selection, the SDP 'held' Cambridge, with the joint meeting choosing Shirley Williams as the Alliance candidate. Seven other SDP target seats held joint closed selection meetings. ●

Not too June

JUNE AND November are favourite dates for the election, say bookmakers William Hill, followed by May this year, September, October and May next year. But the rewards aren't big enough for one Blackpool hotelier who wanted to insure against the cost of October's Tory party conference being cancelled.

Our regular bookies' opinion poll, the Tick Tack Index, reflects Labour's Christmas misery and the cheshire cat's grin of the Liberal/SDP Alliance. The chances of each party winning the most seats at the general election are now (with the change since October in brackets):

Tory	62½%	(+7½)
Labour	35%	(−6)
Lib/SDP	2½%	(−1½)

(Averaging the odds quoted by Ladbroke, William Hill and Coral.)

If you want to bet on Labour to be the largest party, you get most for your money with William Hill at 7 to 4 (win £7 plus your £4 stake back, less 40p betting tax). ●

Stopping the rot

IN DETROIT last month, US unions were seeking under American labour law an election (a ballot among employees on union recognition) at a telecommunications company. A week before the hearing the company split the 450-strong workforce into small groups of 20, at separate motels — and told them they were sacked, and the plant at which they worked would be closed down. Returning to work, they found armed guards barring their way.

The company was MCI, America's second-largest long-distance phone operator, set up after the deregulation of AT&T. MCI's largest stockholder, at 16 per cent, is the world's largest computer company — IBM.

Morty Bahr, the expansive president of the US Communication Workers' Association, told the story this week to an extraordinary gathering: a 22-country conference aimed at increasing — or even, in most countries, *starting* — union organisation in IBM.

Equally extraordinary is likely to be another union gathering on Friday in the Wembley Conference Centre in north London. Egged on by Neil Kinnock and John Prescott, attended by such worthy institutions as ACAS, the MSC and the Citizens' Advice Bureau, it is the start of an attempt by the TGWU transport workers to try to draw into union membership temporary and part-time workers.

Well-paid secure workers in the glossy, high-tech IBM and low-paid, high turnover teenagers flipping hamburgers in McDonalds don't seem on the surface to have much in common, but the link is there: non-unionism. Long ignored by Britain's unions, which have in the past chosen instead to try to defend an ever-dwindling laager of traditional, highly-organised, mainly male workers in large plants, non-unionism is finally starting to come to the fore in trade union priorities.

The growth of more flexible patterns of work — temporary and part-time labour, short-term contracts, outworking and homeworking — has produced a group of workers largely outside the union net. The decline of old, highly-unionised industries and the rise of new sectors — service and high-tech — especially when coupled with a shift of work from the unionised North to the less unionised (apart from London) South has also pushed up non-unionism to the point where on the TUC's own calculations union membership is now only about 40 per cent of the workforce.

Which nut — Big Blue or Big Mac — will be harder for the unions to crack is impossible to tell. There are similarities: both sectors attract workers who actively don't want to be in a union — temporary workers because a union is often part of the restrictive work regime they want to leave behind, high-tech employees because their work, their thinking, their culture, is individualistic, anti-collective.

But there are differences too. High-tech workers, especially in IBM, don't feel they need a union because their employers make sure that their pay, their conditions, and their employment practices are sufficiently advanced to render what unions can offer virtually irrelevant. Employers of temporary labour often (often unconsciously, too) use the bitter reality of high unemployment to ensure that such workers don't want to join a union because they're afraid to.

Neither set of union responses is unaware of the scale of the challenge each is facing. Herman Rebhan, secretary-general of the International Metalworkers' Federation, said this week: 'We're setting out to tackle one of the biggest jobs in 20th-century trade union organisation'. The TGWU, whose conference is in effect an attempt to reverse by default standing union policy on agency labour, says in its temporary workers' charter: 'We stand now at another crossroad'; or as an

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internal union paper puts it about existing union policy: 'It will be ineffective in reducing the incidence of temporary work. Rather, it may simply exclude temporary workers from union membership'.

What's important, for the TGWU and UK unions at Wembley, and for unions worldwide at the IBM conference, is not just the recognition of the growth and strength of non-unionism (crucial though that may be), but the fact that, for the first time in the long years of recession, the unions are trying — hesitantly, but realistically — to do something about it: trying to stop what they see as the rot.

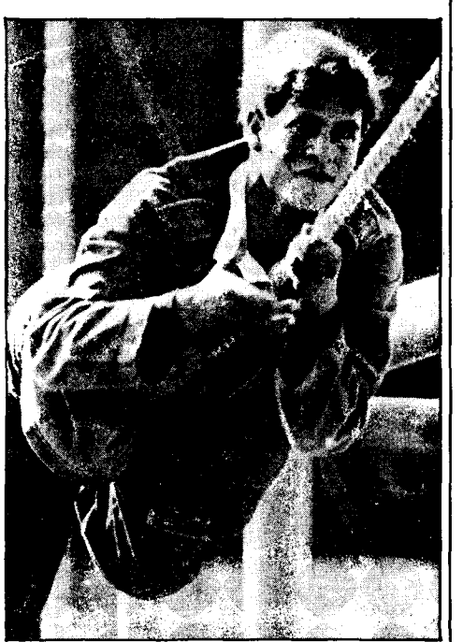
Philip Bassett

Politics of envy

HOW DO YOU motivate the man who has everything? You give him more. In the case of Sir Ralph Halpern, chair of clothes retailer Burton, you need to give him a lot more. His translation into the £1-million-a-year salary league was eased by a couple of articles in the *Sun* outlining how tough his typical day is (meetings, that sort of thing). But once past that barrier, media outrage — or even interest — diminishes rapidly. Hence news of a new share option scheme that could bring him £8 million in 1992 was received calmly. Our Politics of Envy Unit supplies more facts about the man who gave you Top Man. He's already got an option scheme. He made a £1.7 million profit in November 1985, and cashed in some more last month, to raise a mere £127,000. He currently has a potential profit of £3.8 million yet to cash in. Hence the need for at least twice as much to persuade him to get up in the mornings for the next five years. ●

If the caption fits

No 1



You obviously so enjoyed our news-picture Caption Contest in our Christmas issue (*winners' names next issue*) that we're making a weekly game of it while stocks of public figures last. £10 Book Token for the best bubble or caption to the above, entries no later than first-post Tuesday 27 January please. And of course we'll publish your winning witticism in our issue of 30 January. ●

Convoy: the truth

DESPITE CONTINUED evasion by defence ministers about the contents of the military transporter overturned near Salisbury last Saturday, official documents make it clear that the sole job of such convoys is to carry nuclear weapons.

Secret official instructions to the police, obtained by the *New Statesman*, note that 'from time to time it is necessary to move special weapons by road convoy within the United Kingdom'. 'Special' weapons are, of course, nuclear. An accompanying diagram is headed 'RAF Nuclear Weapons Convoy Composition'.

Last week's accident was the most serious ever involving nuclear weapons in transit in Britain to have become publicly known. The precautions taken afterwards suggest that the event came into the higher or highest level of three official categories of potential accidents. Official regulations define these categories using the codeword OLDHAM. OLDHAM ONE excludes radiation leaks or other safety threats. OLDHAM TWO, however, means that the 'convoy [is] involved in an accident which may affect safety but NO radioactive material spilled'. The Salisbury crash could also have been graded OLDHAM THREE, which involves radioactive leaks, since it would have taken some time to check whether or not weapons had been damaged. On receipt of an OLDHAM message, the local police control centre has immediately to notify both the Defence Ministry and the RAF's Special Safety Organisation, based near Bristol. Once the emergency procedure is activated, troops are instructed to 'cordon at 300-metre radius minimum and ensure that cordon contains the radioactive hazard'; and to 'provide initial control of entry to, and exit from, the hazardous zone, including protection and monitoring of personnel'.

There have been accidents to the convoy before. In June 1985, two nuclear weapons transporters returning from the Clyde submarine base collided in the centre of Helensburgh. Thereafter, one damaged transporter had to be towed for 400 miles. The MoD investigation of the incident has never been published. The same convoy, however, continues to travel regularly through built-up areas, including Leicester, Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Watford, Reading and Slough. Defence ministers have continued to claim that there was 'no hazard' to the public from the weekend accident, or from such convoys in general. The first assertion may be true; the second is certainly false. No other commodity travels British roads with a fire tender and decontamination equipment never further than 200 yards away, or requires its cab drivers to be equipped with hermetically sealed cabs and filters on air intakes.

Duncan Campbell

That divide again

MINISTERS have devised a new wheeze to persuade journalists that the North-South divide is a myth — and, surprisingly, the *Independent* has fallen for it. On Monday its front page reported that 'government ministers have been handed figures showing that unemployment has grown far faster in the South than in the North of England since Mrs Thatcher came to office'. According to these figures, unemployment in London has risen by 242 per cent, while the growth rate in the North has been half as fast — 123 per cent.

Those figures are strictly correct but highly misleading. In 1979 unemployment in London was running at 3.3 per cent, while in the North it was 7.9 per cent. The North's higher base figure meant that any given rise in unemployment was bound to have a lower *percentage* effect than in London. For example, a one point rise in London (from 3.3 to 4.3 per cent) meant a 30 per cent rise in the capital. The same absolute rise in the North increased unemployment by only 13 per cent.

The truth is that since 1979 unemployment has risen by ten points in the North, to almost 18 per cent, and by 7 points in London to just over 10 per cent. For the record, the British regions where unemployment has *really* risen fastest are the West Midlands, the North, Yorkshire and Humberside, the North West and Wales; the regions where the rise has been slowest are: London, the South East, the South West and East Anglia. ●

The hour of weed

THE DISCLOSURE-after-30-years rule which saw the Suez papers of 1956 released earlier this year is not total. Civil servants vet each document before it is released to the Public Record Office, a process known affectionately as 'weeding'. This year, by accident, one of the weeder's own documents has come to light.

The document is headed 'Sensitivity Review' and describes certain Memoranda placed before the Chiefs of Staff Committee in 1956 which are still apparently unsuitable for public reading. It is endorsed 'No political sensitive pieces' and lists six documents which should remain secret. Two of the documents deal with Berlin. Memorandum 110, entitled 'Action in the event of another Soviet blockade of Berlin', is withheld from the public indefinitely because it apparently 'reveals UK and Allied plans which would still be valid'. A more sinister document withheld on security grounds is entitled 'Central Government in Global War: The Military Organisation'. This is withheld indefinitely because it 'describes the role to be played in Central Government by the Armed Forces in a future war'.

A document entitled 'Intelligence Organisation in the Far East' is withheld because it 'refers to liaison with foreign and Commonwealth intelligence services, mentions deficiencies in intelligence cover, refers to the use of service attachés to acquire intelligence, gives brief description of the work of SIFE [Security Intelligence Far East]'.

This is weeding of pretty ancient plants. They can be of minimal use to an enemy: their loss is a blow to writers and researchers.

Andy Thomas

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PETER KELLNER

The Guinness scandal: new readers start here

FOR THIS WEEK, and this week only, this column makes a special promise. It will disclose no new facts. Readers looking for unpublished opinion poll figures, or names of MPs with Aids, or secrets of Sir Robert Armstrong's next gaffe, will be disappointed. Instead we have a simple purpose: to take the Guinness saga and translate it into English.

Guinness is one of Britain's largest and best-known companies. It is in the middle of an enormous scandal. Yet the very people who ought to be most outraged — the 95 per cent who do not read the City pages but whose lives are affected by the actions of big business — are the people whose bafflement at the antics of Ernest Saunders, Ivan Boesky and others has prevented the scandal from becoming a politically live issue.

Now Parliament is back and the opposition parties are pressing the government to act, the saliency of the Guinness affair depends largely on its clarity. Here is this column's attempt to clarify the story so far.

LAST JANUARY Guinness launched a bid to take over the Scottish company Distillers. They are the people that make Johnny Walker whisky and Gordon's gin. At the time Distillers was trying to fend off another takeover bid, from the Argyll Group. Throughout the winter and spring the battle raged. In April, Guinness eventually won.

It seemed to be the latest in a string of triumphs for Guinness's chairman, Ernest Saunders. Instead it has caused his downfall. Last month the Department of Trade and Industry announced an inquiry into Guinness's takeover tactics. Last week Saunders announced he would stand down until the inquiry is completed. Few people expect him to return.

The central fact is that the rival bids for Distillers were paper bids. That is, Argyll and Guinness offered shares rather than cash to Distillers shareholders. This meant that the values of the rival bids depended on the share prices of the bidding companies. Guinness's share price rose by 25 per cent during the crucial phase of the battle, mid-March to mid-April. That meant the value of its offer increased by 25 per cent.

In the scandal that has erupted over Guinness, all the detailed questions ultimately merge into one: was there any hanky-panky in that rise in the company's share price — or was it merely the fortuitous play of market forces that just happened to come along and help Guinness at the right time?

Capitalism is about letting the market decide. The difference between honest and dishonest capitalism is that in honest capitalism market dealings are proper and above board, whereas in dishonest capitalism the market is rigged. If public faith in the essential honesty of financial capitalism is shattered, then the values most dear to the Tories are undermined. Hence the potency of the Guinness affair, and the importance of unravelling who did what to cause Guinness's share price to rise last spring.

Various strands have now begun to unravel. First, the activities of Ivan Boesky, a crooked Wall Street financier who has recently been fined $100 million for insider trading, which is a criminal offence. In the second half of 1985 Boesky bought shares in Distillers. During the takeover battle between Guinness and Argyll for Distillers Boesky also bought shares in Guinness. So did a close associate called Meshulam Riklis.

Riklis owned a company called Shenley Industries. Shenley distributes Dewars whisky, a Distillers brand, in America. Through Shenley, Riklis spent £60 million buying shares in Guinness. Shenley committed a criminal offence under company law by buying more than 5 per cent of Guinness without disclosing its stake. But the more important question is, why did Riklis and Boesky buy Guinness shares? And, more specifically, did Guinness offer any illegal inducements to them to buy?

One damning fact emerged just before Christmas. Last March, just as the Distillers battle was entering its most critical stage, Boesky set up a partnership to invest in takeovers. Guinness contributed $100 million, 30 per cent of the equity. Why? Was it coincidence or payment for Boesky's help? What deals, if any, were done to cement the Guinness-Boesky-Riklis mutual aid society?

'Guinness, impure genius: NS report continues on p8'

THE SECOND strand concerns Roger Seelig, who resigned just after Christmas as a director of the merchant bank Morgan Grenfell. Morgans are no newcomers to City scandal. Another former executive, Geoffrey Collier, faces prosecution for insider trading. Seelig is (or was) a City high-flyer. At 40 he is a director of Habitat Mothercare and Underwoods. At the time of the Distillers takeover, Morgan acted as Guinness's financial advisers. Seelig handled the account.

British company law puts merchant banks in a curious position during takeover battles. Companies are not allowed to buy shares, or to bribe others to buy their shares, except under very strict conditions. Less clear are the powers of their merchant banks to orchestrate such share-buying. There is little doubt that Seelig did things for his Guinness client that Guinness was barred from doing for itself. The questions to be answered are: what exactly did Seelig do? Were any of those things illegal? What instructions did he receive from Guinness? Were any of them illegal? Morgan Grenfell is already worried by these questions. Not only has Seelig resigned from Morgans; the bank has also severed its links with Guinness.

One specific share transaction at the nerve-centre of the Guinness scandal does seem to have involved Seelig and Morgan Grenfell. During the battle for Distillers Seelig sought the help of another merchant bank, Henry Ansbacher. What happened is a matter of dispute.

Ansbacher's story is that Seelig asked Ansbacher to persuade its clients to buy Guinness shares. If the share price rose, those clients would benefit. But if the price fell, the clients need not suffer. For Ansbacher was asked to buy the shares back from its clients at the price they originally paid. Seelig promised that any money lost by Ansbacher by these transactions would be refunded.

More than two million Guinness shares were traded this way. In early May, after Guinness had won control of Distillers, and Guinness's shares had fallen in value, Ansbacher bought back 2.1 million Guinness shares from its clients at the previous, higher price. On 6 May Ansbacher sent Morgan a bill for £7,614,682.10. This covered Ansbacher's total costs in rebuying the shares. The bill was settled by a cheque, not from Morgan, *but from Guinness itself*. Olivier Roux, Guinness's finance director paid precisely the sum Ansbacher had requested. Ansbacher says the shares now belong to either Guinness or Morgan.

Guinness's story is that its cheque was not to pay for the shares (that would have been illegal). It was instead an interest-free short-term deposit. Why a public company should be so daft as to make an *interest-free* deposit has not been explained.

This dispute has had one entertaining and one serious consequence. The fun bit has been the spectacle of a cheque for £48,000 — the dividend payment on those 2.1 million shares — being handed round the City like stolen goods in a manic pass-the-parcel game. Nobody wants to cash the cheque: the first company to do so would have to admit it had been lying. (Gentlemen: let me help you out. Send me the cheque and the share certificate and I'll lodge them in my bank.)

The serious consequence has been the resignation this week of Olivier Roux, and the possibility that investigations into the Guinness-Morgan-Ansbacher triangle will yield further discoveries of strange City practices.

Whoever is telling the truth, nobody emerges with much credit. If Guinness is right, why on earth did it send Ansbacher a cheque for precisely that amount on that day? The odds that it is pure coincidence are roughly 761,468,210 to one. If Ansbacher was right, and even if its people did nothing illegal, it must have suspected that somebody somewhere down the line was doing something they shouldn't.

We have not heard the last of this story by a long and grubby chalk. This week new evidence has emerged that Guinness set aside £200m. to boost its share price during the Distillers battle. Final question: will enough come out to undermine public faith in financial capitalism, or will it remain a spectator sport: 'great fun to watch all those toffs at each others' throats, guv — but it's nothing to do with me'? □

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Good for whom?

Guinness, the £3bn drinks group, has lost its chairman, Ernest Saunders and is now the subject of government investigation.* DAVID LASCELLES *argues that the City's 'arrogance' could lead to a crackdown

WHAT EVERYONE is waiting for in the Guinness affair is one of those damning little phrases that were so popular in the 1970s, like calling Lonrho 'the unacceptable face of capitalism', or describing Robert Maxwell as 'unfit to run a public company'. That, and some blood. Something to satisfy that sense of outrage, that lust for revenge which pumps through British veins at the slightest whiff of scandal in the City. With no fewer than four official inquiries now going on into the affairs of the Square Mile, the chances of the DTI inspectors coming up with some damaging evidence and memorable prose must be high.

The trouble with inspectors, though, is that they take a long time — months, even years. And Paul Channon at the Department of Trade has hinted that he may not publish their findings anyway, only bring criminal charges, if any. And that won't be good enough. No matter that Einstein might have taken a moment or two to get his mind round the complexities of the affair, in Westminster and Fleet Street the hounds are baying; fresh evidence leaks out almost daily of Guinness's and its City allies' questionable dealings and heads are rolling. Something, the table thumpers are crying, must be done, and quickly. But what? What a poser for Mrs Thatcher with elections on her mind!

The party for *all* the shareholders

She must feel particularly galled since it was only last year, with the Big Bang, that the government yielded to the City's demand that it be allowed to regulate itself rather than be kept in check by some statutory agency. How tempting it must now be to repay that breach of faith by cracking down on all those high-paid wheeler dealers. *The Tories, after all, are no longer just the party of big business and big money. They are the party of the small shareholder whose faith in the markets must not be destroyed by scandal (though the way the markets have been zooming up this year, there is little evidence of any shaking of the faith).*

For the time being, though, the answer must be, hang on, because even now nobody knows for sure exactly what Guinness got up to. We have, almost certainly, heard but a fraction of the complete story, and the full ramifications are not clear. Does the fault lie with City regulation, or the Companies Act; or the Takeover Code, or unbridled takeover zeal? Will the remedy lie in tougher regulation, more prosecutions, or even some form of statutory curb on takeovers?

What we do know for sure is this: in its determination to win last year's takeover battle for the Distillers company, Guinness management under Ernest Saunders barred no holds. The circumstantial evidence points to highly unusual, if not actually illegal, actions: was an interest-free 'deposit' placed by Guinness finance director Olivier Roux with the Henry Ansbacher merchant bank in reality a disguised payment for Guinness shares, in breach of the Companies Act? Was a $100m investment by Guinness with Ivan Boesky in New York a thank you for the disgraced arbitrageur's help in the bid? Why did Distillers pension fund buy 15m Guinness shares after it was taken over? Why did Schenley, an American company which held the highly lucrative Distillers agency in the US, buy more than five per cent of Guinness shares, and fail to disclose it as required by UK law?

It all has a nasty whiff to it, which Mr Saunders's decision to step down last Saturday has done little to dispel; quite the opposite, since it has reinforced suspicions that the affair touches the very top of the company.

The most obvious answer which suggests itself to all these questions is that someone was keen to prop up Guinness's share price at the height of the bid — which was to be partially financed by an issue of Guinness shares to Distillers shareholders. That would be illegal if Guinness itself was financing the scheme because publicly quoted companies are not allowed to buy — or help others to buy — their own shares without permission from shareholders, for the good reason that they can manipulate their own share price.

Hasty solutions

With allegations of criminal wrongdoing in the air, it is hard to argue against early solutions, and drastic ones at that. One can be dismissed quite quickly: the argument by Roy Hattersley, the shadow chancellor, and Robin Cook, Labour's trade spokesman, that the affair reinforces the cases for a US-style Securities and Exchange Commission to replace the self-regulatory system introduced by the new Financial Services Act. Guinness's alleged misdeeds happened in the first half of last year, many months before the Act even

The invisible consultant

'TO SUM UP, we believe the problems that inevitably accompany an acquisition are problems to be managed aggressively . . .' An appropriate epitaph to l'affaire Guinness and one provided by a hitherto invisible participant — Bill Bain, chairman of Guinness's management consultant, the American firm Bain & Company.

While Olivier Roux, Guinness's ex-Finance Director, on secondment from Bain, takes the flak, his firm's precise role has gone undiscussed. This stems from the company's obsession with secrecy — witness their meagre 1½ page press handout which states: 'Exclusive commitment to a client . . . also implies the strictest possible code of confidentiality, since obviously Bain consultants are given access to the innermost strategic plans of the client.'

Bain enjoys a mixed reputation in the world of consulting — professional, astonishingly hardworking, but with an overly aggressive, messianic corporate culture based around the company founder Bill Bain. To a consultant from another top rank firm they are 'very different from other consultancies, more aggressive, more upfront, they're "Bainies", with a very strong corporate culture . . . a sort of worship of Bill Bain'. But to an ex-employee 'They're one of the world's very best firms — smarter, faster, and more *honest* than any British merchant bank.'

This brings us to Guinness — one of Bain's most important clients, employing upwards of 100 of its staff, and accounting for 10 per cent of its world-wide revenue. The contract stems from the early 1980s — apocryphal legend has it that Saunders walked in off the street to Bain, after asking every management consultant in London who were the best two consultancies around. All placed themselves first, but equally uniformly Bain second. The subsequent relationship between client and consultant has been very close — and Bain must take a fair share of the credit for turning Guinness round — but the very closeness prompts some uneasy questions.

It was after all Bain, not Ernest Saunders, or indeed Guinness's merchant bank Morgan Grenfell who first picked Distillers as a bid target. Indeed another former Bain employee went so far as to say that 'all Guinness's bids over the last few years were the result of work by Bain — though Ernest made the final decision'. Indeed Bain and Saunders had decided to bid for Distillers way in advance of Argyll's bid for the concern. As one analyst commented, 'Ernest was horrified when Argyll bid, he had to skulk around waiting to be asked to be a "white knight".' Once battle commenced Bain worked around the clock on the Guinness bid — the takeover team of 15 consultants 'working 24 hours and I do mean 24 hours'. And as soon as Guinness's bid for Distillers went unconditional, it was a dozen Bain employees who were the first over the threshold, demanding to see the books.

The key to the bid battle, as Peter Kellner points out, was managing the share price: the key question how far Guinness and its ex-Finance Director manipulated its price. A reliable analysis of Roux has him thus: 'Roux is extremely thorough, a workaholic, cold, extremely bright . . . but as to dishonesty . . . I would be very surprised . . . Olivier would only take a calculated risk . . .' So who calculated the risk — was it Roux operating in a vacuum, was it Morgan Grenfell, or was it his firm?

Patrick Forbes

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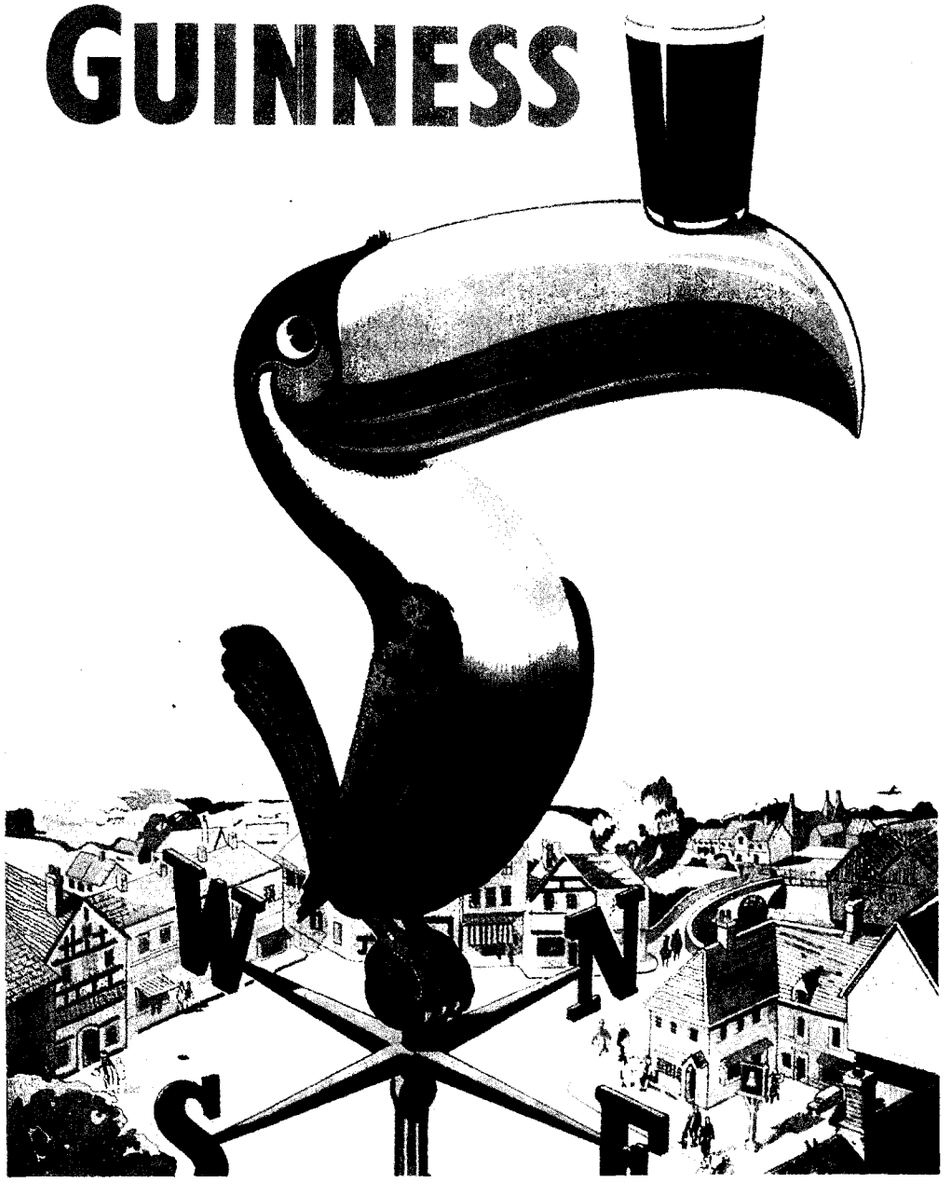
Lovely day for a GUINNESS



came into force: it gives no proof of its effectiveness, or lack of it.

Nevertheless, there is an attractive case for introducing an SEC. It was the Americans, after all, who triggered the whole Guinness affair by tipping the UK authorities off about Guinness's connection with Mr Boesky. What people tend to forget, though, is that the SEC has a spotty record and is not held in universal respect in the US. And despite its independence, it can be as politically motivated as a fully-fledged government department. Moreover, the UK's new Securities and Investments Board created by the FSA to administer City self-regulation already has many of the attributes of the SEC — including powers of enforcement backed by statute. So self-regulation is already a bit of a misnomer.

Furthermore, the specific allegation being made against Guinness — that it bought its own shares — would, if proved, amount to a crime which already carries an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment for the executives responsible. And the FSA gives inspectors appointed by the DTI statutory powers to extract information — which is actually more than the SEC has. The British system may be bittier than the American, and therefore on people's make less impact minds. But it is misleading to suggest that by introducing an SEC, we would be going over to a wholly new and more effective form of regulation.

Besides, in the Guinness case, the issue is not just one of effective regulation. It is also one of corporate responsibility and the conduct of takeovers, and these may be more pertinent. Mr Saunders, a man with autocratic tendencies, had assembled a quite exceptionally aggressive team to pursue his goal of transforming Guinness from a cosy purveyor of stout into one of the great forces in the world drinks industry — a team which includes Mr Olivier Roux, the sharp-minded finance director seconded from Bain & Co (see box) and Mr Roger Seelig of Morgan Grenfell, the star of the City takeover scene.

The need for humiliation

That Mr Saunders was a man who needed to be kept in check has been evident since last September when he was forced, during the Thomas Risk affair, to accept the presence on the board of five non-executive (outside) directors to protect the shareholders' interests: this is an extraordinary thing, if you think about it, since that was what Mr Saunders, as chairman, was supposed to be there for anyway.

The non-executives had not been appointed at the time of the Distillers bid, so they could not have influenced the conduct of it. But in easing Mr Saunders out now, they have shown themselves capable of action and have probably rescued Guinness from disaster. As an issue of public policy, it may be no great shakes, but it does show that having outsiders on a company board can be a good thing. The Bank of England has been pressing for it for years.

Some have used the affair to question the value of takeovers; but that also misses the point. It is far too soon to judge whether Guinness's acquisition of Distillers is a good or a bad thing — anyway, no one has yet come up with effective ways of stopping takeovers in a society where shares are publicly traded.

However, Guinness *does* raise questions about the conduct of takeovers, which is a matter for the Takeover Panel. The status of the Panel, a voluntary City body, is very much up in the air at the moment, and the time may have come to give it official status and statutory powers to enforce its Takeover Code.

Both the Panel and the Code have become 'try-ons' for determined takeover artists, and their come-uppance should be more than a gentlemanly rap on the knuckles. Takeovers are supposed to be a bit like elections: shareholders vote for the most attractive offer. *But with the kind of practices that are now commonplace in the City (not all of them illegal), such as placing large blocks of shares in friendly hands, takeovers often amount to rigged elections whose outcome is determined by people who have no long-term interest in the company being bought.*

The Guinness problem calls for a reasoned, not an impassioned response. We are, after all, talking about complicated financial machinery which won't necessarily work better if bashed with a hammer. This is not going to be much consolation to Mrs Thatcher, though, as she faces the political squalls. And if a crack-down on the City is the only acceptable answer, then the City has only itself to blame. It has been given plenty of chances to show that it can behave, and it has blown all of them: Lloyd's, Lonrho, insider dealing, Guinness.

In its obsession with itself, the City tends to forget that it is no more than a means to an end: the efficient distribution of capital. It can claim none of the earthy loyalties of industries which actually make things. It would be a shame if it was more tightly shackled; it is undoubtedly a rare British success story, and London is still viewed as a haven of regulatory sanity by other financial centres. But if our regulatory regime only reinforces arrogant attitudes among financial practitioners, then humiliation may be the answer. □

David Lascelles is the Financial Times' *Banking Correspondent.*

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MEDIA

The Dr Ruth Good Sex Show

Michael Johnson

AMERICANS living abroad are accustomed to abuse. Most of us take it lying down because we feel we probably deserve it. The crassness and isolationism of attitudes back home are offensive to the British. I admit it.

The root of this abuse is not so much the people themselves — many of whom are quite normal — as it is the accelerating pace at which American popular culture is dominating Britain. American movies, books, pop music and junk food seem more intrusive on the British scene than at any time in recent years. Escapist Hollywood cinema fare, warmed-over Truman Capote stories, face-lifted crooners like Tony Bennett, second-rate comedians on the Terry Wogan Show, have converged to cheapen the scene.

The distaste is understandable. What is more puzzling is the simultaneous urge of the British public to embrace this same material and love it even more than the Americans who produced it. The love-hate relationship that surfaced when the tourists stayed home last summer thrives in subtler forms on the cultural scene.

But of all the varieties of cultural sleaze foisted upon the world, US television programming is the most omnipresent, and probably has become the prism through which foreigners form their most lasting perceptions of Americans. The message of this appalling material is disturbing indeed, and with each passing year the TV entertainers outdo themselves making it worse. I realised the other day that I can guess by the sound of gunshots and screeching tires that my children in the next room are watching US imports, not the more sedate entertainment put out by Britons for Britain.

As Ronald Reagan might say, however, we ain't seen nothin' yet. Men in little yellow trucks are working their way across London at this moment connecting homes to the Westminster Cable system. My home was cabled recently, and life has not been the same since. It must be so much worse for native British who are unaccustomed to this let-it-all-hang-out trend overtaking America.

> ***'Of all the varieties of cultural sleaze foisted upon the world, US television programming is the most omnipresent, and probably has become the prism through which foreigners form their most lasting perceptions of Americans'***

The implications are profound. I heard one Londoner suggest recently that the real threat to Britain is not from Russia through the stratosphere, Argentina through the Exclusion Zone or France through the Chunnel, it is from America through the magic of video tape. His theory was that Britain would become the 51st state before the end of this century, and without a shot being fired. The American strategy was to soften up British brains with mindless television, after which US troops could calmly wade ashore and seize power. Before Westminster Cable, I used to think the idea was far-fetched.

While some of the high-brow cable offerings nicely supplement the existing fare, the worst of the programmes are far more repugnant than *Starsky and Hutch, The A-Team* and other such silliness already corrupting respectable British homes via BBC and Independent Television. Thanks to cable, we now have available an even sweeter diet of brain candy — sentimental movies that never made it in the paying movie market, endless hours of rock music videos, old cowboy films with right and wrong clearly laid out, and, as filler, the cutesy situation comedies dating back to the 1950s and 1960s.

BUT FOR THE uptight British viewer, all this pales before the open discussion of kinky sex. Tuning into *The Dr Ruth Good Sex Show* for the first time is the greatest shock of all. Dr Ruth is a very modern sexologist of German extraction who dispenses intimate advice in a bizarre accent while wiggling and twinkling before the camera. Shaped and sized like a female ET, she is an expert in errrections and orrrgasms, which she dissects in startling detail. Her offhand comment that a wife should feel free to toss onion rings at her husband's private parts — if he likes it — has become a classic line in the States. How could he like it?

A couple of weeks ago she interviewed two lesbian lawyers who were suffering a patch of 'marital difficulties' because one of the girls had dared to be friendly with a man at the office. Dr Ruth earnestly counselled them to examine whether they were true lesbians. To the layman, it was clear that at least one of them had a switch-hitter inside her trying to get out.

This is not post-11 p.m. viewing with little triangles in the corner of the screen. It pours into the home in massive doses, day and night, aimed at housewives during the day, and apparently aimed at couples in the evenings. It makes a change from copulating turtles and other close-ups of nature's ooze and slime on BBC-2, perhaps. But first-time viewers often misunderstand the show as tasteless satire, in the *Private Eye* or *Spitting Image* vein, only to find themselves mesmerised by Dr Ruth's ability to get away with it. Gradually one realises that this is not satire, it is much worse. These Americans are sincere.

Dr Ruth is clinical. Another show disseminated by Westminster Cable, *Divorce Court*, is low drama. The cast includes a real-life retired judge who holds sway in a stage-set mock courtroom in which unemployed actors spill their fictionalised sordid stories of adultery, mental cruelty and other misdeeds for the judge and a slathering public to hear. (One wife recently claimed she wanted out of her marriage because her husband had become a weird religious fanatic and was starving the children with his wheatgerm diet, and donating the family savings to the sect. Another husband complained that his wife was sexually loose, and therefore was not entitled to half his property in the divorce settlement. She countered that he was the loose one, and had insisted on an 'open marriage' and evenings with 'swingers'. She won.) The awful acting and worse scripting make this another seeming satire.

Perhaps the show with the greatest skin-crawl factor is the *Phil Donahue Show*, a fearless discussion programme hosted by boyish, blow-dried Phil Donahue. It is a super-slick chat show that brings in famous guests to rap with the audience of Midwestern housewives and also take calls from the public. This Chicago-based production, syndicated throughout the country, achieved its peak a few years ago when a US Congressman phoned in to scold his wife (the famous guest) for appearing nude in *Playboy* magazine. The Midwestern housewives squealed with glee. And in another recent show, a fat and greasy husband appeared onstage with his similar-looking wife to extol the joys of sleeping around. Their children are kept informed of all the affairs, they said, because total honesty is the objective.

> ***'First-time viewers often misunderstand the show as tasteless satire, in the Private Eye or Spitting Image vein, only to find themselves mesmerised by Dr Ruth's ability to get away with it. Gradually one realises that this is not satire, it is much worse. These Americans are sincere'***

Like Dr Ruth and *Divorce Court*, this material has been pulled out of the library and sold abroad in bulk. The effect of back-to-back programming throughout the day, rather than in smaller doses as originally programmed in the US market, makes it seem all the worse. Dr Ruth never seems to get tired. Phil Donahue thrusts his microphone into ladies' faces all day long. The judge bangs his gavel non-stop.

Like other popular entertainments, the television invasion has made thinking Americans in Britain worry about the impact their countrymen are having on what has always been revered as a superior place. We can take the abuse but we cannot stop its cause.

When one American writer visited Shakespeare's home a few years ago, she was so excited, she later recalled, 'I thought the top of my head would come off'. It would be a pity to spoil that kind of enthusiasm through degenerate offerings of our own making. □

Michael Johnson is editor-in-chief of International Management.

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Writing on the wall

The six-day rooftop protest at Barlinnie prison which ended last weekend was the longest in Scottish penal history. We publish three pieces analysing the worsening crisis in the Scottish Prison Service beginning with **JIMMY BOYLE** *on 'God' moving through the jail*

PA

Witnessing the assault of another prisoner pushed them past their limit, say the rooftop protestors

BARLINNIE upholds all the old traditions of prison life. It has a tight hierarchical structure which, in prison officer career terms, means brains will get you nowhere whilst sheer durability in the form of seniority of service gets you everywhere. The governor, in this instance, Andy 'Square-go' Gallagher, is top of the pile. Each morning the internal phone system reaches overload as he leaves his office to do the morning tour of the prison. The message is clear and simple: 'God is coming'. In each of the wings and workshops prisoners put more elbow grease into scrubbing the wing floor or hammering coir into a doormat. Staff assume diligent supervisory postures.

As he moves around the governor is usually accompanied by chief officer one, chief officer two and a principal officer. The two latter subordinates perform the roles of barking dogs; shouting at prisoners, making sure everyone is at their place of work. The governor remains aloof. Power and status are personified in this daily ritual. Staff lean heavily on the prisoners at this point. By and large everyone knows the game and plays it accordingly, or heaven help him.

The Barlinnie governor earned his nickname 'Square-go' while he was in charge of young offenders many years ago. It wasn't uncommon for him to enter the cell of a truculent youth and offer him a fist-fight, known in the jargon as a 'square-go'. A back-up team of officers were always within earshot, of course. Part of his image was a pork-pie hat and leather gloves. Before ascending to the top governor post at Barlinnie he had a shot at Peterhead (location of a prisoners' revolt last year — *NS* 21 Nov.).

It was here that he was involved in an incident in the solitary block. Legal reasons make it difficult for anyone to comment publicly on what took place. It was soon after this that the prisoner involved, Bobby Brodie found himself transferred to the Special Unit and Gallagher himself promoted to take over Barlinnie prison. As someone who started as a basic prison officer he knows what it feels like when the governor makes his tour of duty.

Barlinnie, in Glasgow, is a human warehouse holding 1,300 men with only 900 cells. The population is predominantly short-termers ranging from the chronic alcoholic serving 30 days for breach of the peace to the shoplifter serving nine months. The size of the place and overcrowding combined with a staff inadequately trained contribute to a general abuse of prisoners both mentally and physically. When herded like cattle from A to B they are bawled at, pushed into line and often verbally abused.

Most prisoners believe that prisons are run for the benefit of staff and are most certainly not for the improvement of prisoners. Witness Barlinnie staff on the wing galleries racing to see who can get their men showered and locked up first. No sooner are men into the shower with soap on when staff shout 'soap off'. All of this so that staff can sit chatting or playing cards. If a prisoner dare ring his doorbell and interrupt their game then god help him.

If the doorbell is ignored, as it usually is, then this becomes a point of friction. It is these petty abuses accummulated one on top of the other, day in day out, that build up the tension. Another surrounds incoming and outgoing mail, the way it is read and censored by staff.

Don't let them see

All of this is compounded by a growing number of Barlinnie long-termers being subjected to the same abusive conditions and treatment normally reserved for short-termers. The explosive ingredient here is that the short-termers have a restraining factor, their pending release, whereas long-termers don't. The long-termers' perspective has to be different and it is. In cases of physical brutality short-termers will normally roll up in a ball, accept a few kicks and punches and not complain about it.

The long-termers sees it differently. If he doesn't take some sort of stance than he lives in terror. He knows prison staff do and have perpetrated violence on prisoners with impunity. The complaints procedure is ineffective as, at the end of the day, the burden of proof lies with the prisoner — who is usually charged with assaulting staff, a ready explanation of any injuries as received whilst being restrained.

If there is such a thing as an accepted, unspoken rule to brutality it is this: prison staff do it behind closed doors and away from other prisoners. The crisis that gripped Barlinnie last week was described by protesters to a few staff full of the New Year spirit breaking the unspoken rule applying to brutality. Sammy Ralston, a long-term prisoner, was, they allege, brutalised in front of other prisoners. This put the rest of the prisoners' backs to the wall, unleashing the pent-up fury all of us witnessed.

The response of officials and politicians has been a rejection of the allegations. It was untimely for them that Sammy Ralston had to appear in public court on a civil case with facial injuries for the world to see. However, this didn't stop Labour's Hugh Brown MP (Glasgow, Provan) from emerging from a talk in the prison with Gallagher to tell the media that the protesters on the roof were a hard core of manipulative people holding hostages for reasons unrelated to the alleged brutalising of Sammy Ralston. His statement was abetted by comments from the Director of Scottish Prisons who suggests he may have to consider shackles for such men.

THE ISSUE of brutal treatment and harsh conditions in Scottish prisons has once again reared its ugly head. The ironic feature in this latest siege, which saw prison officers taken hostage, is

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that the Barlinnie walls also house one of the most advanced concepts in penology in this country, the Special Unit.

The unit holds nine long-term prisoners. In the thirteen years of its existence it has taken some of the most violent prisoners and done something worthwhile with them. Its relaxed regime allowed them to participate in the day-to-day running of the place. In essence, it has given them more responsibility and decision-making opportunities.

This is the opposite of the normal penal system which takes all responsibiity and decision making away from the prisoner and expects him to emerge a more responsible person. The Unit allows prisoners and staff to be held accountable to each other for behaviour and attitudes. A strong community spirit is created, bolstered by permitting families and outsiders easy access; as such they become an ideal safeguard, preventing abuses from either side.

But despite its apparent success the Special Unit is unique in Scotland, without commitment to create others. The old guard who wield considerable influence in the prison service don't want to know. Any suggestion of the concept expanding is unacceptable to them. One only needs to look as far as the main Barlinnie prison and the recent siege to get an insight into why.

All said and done, the prisoners have put the writing on the wall. The message is clear; society holds them accountable by putting them in prison for offences they have committed. Prison staff should be held equally accountable when they commit offences against prisoners. Instead we have seen prisoners driven to commit serious crimes knowing there is no escape from the heavy penalties they will incur in order to seek justice for another prisoner they hold to have been criminally assaulted. The situation is now more explosive that it ever was. There has to be an alternative to this deadlock. Ironically, that alternative lies in Barlinnie Special Unit. □

Jimmy Boyle, formerly regarded as Scotland's hardest-core prisoner, went through the Barlinnie Special Unit and campaigns for prison reform while running the Gateway Exchange, a young people's rehabilitation project.

Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland finds it so much easier to blame '50 bad men' than to change a rotten system

'Dear diary'

We publish extracts from the prison diaries of* MICK McCALLUM — *an eye-witness view of the chaos and brutality of the Scots penal system. Names deleted for legal reasons are indicated by asterisks

McCALLUM has been in Scottish and English prisons from the age of sixteen. In Borstal for a minor offence, he attacked and wounded a prison officer. He was then transferred to Carstairs, a penal mental hospital for five years; after Carstairs — Peterhead, Inverness, Barlinnie, Parkhurst, amongst others.

Last week BBC2 *Newsnight* produced an excellent report on the failings of the Scots penal system including a sight of the McCallum prison diaries and disclosure of the previously unpublished Scottish Office report on 'Alternative Regimes' for the prison system north of the border. McCallum's life and diaries (these extracts were written in the notorious Inverness 'cages') underline the report's admission that:

> 'the lack of planned progression through the system was undermined by the lack of any coherent and consistent regimes which might encourage prisoners to respond positively and behave well'.

Monday January 4/82

As I was going back to my cell on A/2/14, one of the staff said, one down, two to go? I said are you referring to me?, a couple of fellow prisoners were at the back of me and heard this being said to me. He said you're on report McCallum. I could hardly believe my ears. This was the same screw who had nicked two of my friends, I said on report for what? He said you know what.

I said yes you bastard and emptied cups of water into my chamber pot which was only a quarter full of piss, and threw the contents of the pot in the direction of the screw. By this time a number of other screws were round the scene; some of the contents may have splashed on them. If it did so it was complete accident as the piss was meant only for this one screw who has been going out of his way to make life unpleasant for myself and certain other prisoners who associate with me.

When I was dragged down to the punishment cells after dousing this bastard with cold piss, I was slung into cell 2/1 on the top flat of the punishment cells. In the afternoon after my exercise I asked senior staff ***** for my appeal papers. He handed me a notebook. I said where's the rest of my papers. He said that's it. I said go to hell, there's a lot more than that to be brought down. ***** just lashed out and punched me on the face. I was knocked back a pace. He jumped out of the cell and slammed the door in my face, I shouted on a few of the other prisoners that ***** had assaulted me, later on in the evening I was opened up for slop out and saw ***** standing leering. I lost my cool again and threw piss all over him. I was roughly seized and dragged outside to the silent cell where I was flung on the floor and held by the other staff while ***** drew out a pocketknife and sliced through the laces of my boots.

Monday August 31/81

The cages at times can be the quietest places imaginable, so quiet the buzz from the fluorescent lighting is a constant background noise. Even a cough sounds excessively harsh to my own ears so when staff bang locks and gates, it's a bit annoying. This is probably the reason they bang them so loud? When the SI [officers] go off shift for meals or knocking off time Cokey, Mark and myself shout to each other through the ventilation grills.

We are supposed not to talk to each other, but if we didn't it would be a strain on the mind, the SI know if they tried to stop us talking or singing it would only cause more bitterness than there already is. They do try and stop us shouting by turning the large extractor fan on, so that we can't hear each other, but it's like telling a man in a desert not to touch his water.

The lighting is like the sun, It glares down through the bars of the cage out of the reach of the prisoner, surprise, surprise. The tube is 7 foot long and is far too large a light for such a small cell. The cell measures 10 feet wide and sixteen feet long. It's split in half with a barred grill reaching from floor to ceiling, and resembles the cell in an old American sheriff's office. The difference being the prisoner looks not into a corridor but into an empty adjoining cell where during the day he has to put his mattress and blankets.

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Tuesday September 1/81
Prisoners in transit between Peterhead and Barlinnie stop over at Craiginches Prison in Aberdeen for a sandwich of corned beef and a cup of lukewarm tea. The SI don't even remove the handcuffs so the prisoners are all handcuffed in two's and have to eat like that and go to the toilet like that. There is absolutely no need to keep the handcuffs on as Aberdeen is a long term security prison, it's just to degrade, pure and simple. The sandwich is always corned beef. It never changes and the tea is always lukewarm. Prisoners sit in two rows in a small corridor on benches and drink their tea. If there are fourteen or so in transit, it's very cramped and its just as well the tea is lukewarm with the amount of accidents due to the overcrowding on the benches.

Wednesday September 2/81
The cages are purely an experiment by the Scottish Prison Department to see how much people will accept before the red light goes on. This place is to bend the wills and minds of prisoners to accept any degradation or hassle the SI wish to dish out. If the hardest are tamed or more appropriately broken down, what chance have the weaker prisoners . . .

SI are particularly nasty to dossers or down and outs. [They] look on them with contempt and are forever reviling them for being lazy bastards who don't work. One of the worst SI known for it was a Senior SI in Barlinnie, by the name of ****; he was fined one thousand pounds at the beginning of 1980 for taking contraband into the prison and selling it to the prisoners. Yet this same SI used to verbally and physically abuse dossers when he was in charge of 14 work party at Barlinnie. He is also a bitter Orangeman who used to try and give all the dirty jobs to guys with green cards [green cards in a Scottish prison denote the fact that the prisoner is a Roman Catholic].

Friday September 4/81
But when you consider I'm living in a cage 23 hours a day, seven days a week, I see no other human beings except for the doctor and the priest. I regard the SI simply as jailers. I have absolutely nothing in common with them. The only conversation between us is restricted to threats and verbal abuse. I'm surprised they haven't used more physical persuasion, but their bosses probably want as little limelight on the cages as possible.

Tuesday September 8/81
Three times he (Mark L — whose 'real name is David Mather') has been in the cages since December 1978. In fact the cages were reopened especially for him by Bruce Millan [MP, Glasgow, Govan] after he slashed a Prison SI at Saughton Prison in 1978. David Cochrane is the other prisoner here; he can handle things better than most, he is quite a sensible no-nonsense sort of guy. Unlike Mark L and myself the SI don't go out of their way to mess Davy about.

Mark L and myself have both been convicted and sentenced for serious assaults on prison staff, so naturally we get most of the flak from them because of the violence shown towards Prison staff. The last time I assaulted a prison staff was 1967, when I was still a juvenile of sixteen years of age, not that it will ever be forgotten in prison circles or forgiven . . . □

'No clear policy'

Last week's riot laid bare the short-term problems of the Scottish penal system — overcrowding, brutality, appalling conditions.
RICHARD KINSEY, *chairman of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties (SCCL), argues that behind these problems, lies the greater threat of the incoherence of Scottish prison policy — an incoherence now admitted to in unpublished official documents, and two doctoral theses, written by dissenting Prison Governors, both savagely critical of the existing regime*

AFTER FOUR YEARS' study, the Scottish Home and Health Department's Interim report on *'Alternative Regimes'* for the Prison Service admits, quite explicitly, that the Scottish Prison Department operates without any effective or clear policy. It highlights the 'inconsistencies' in prison policy, saying that the 'lack of a properly structured system of classification, allocation, assessment, and regime development is at the root of many of the existing problems of prisoner management.

The report's focus, throughout, is upon 'inmates who present severe management problems'. These include violent and 'uncooperative prisoners', but also those 'who challenge customary constraints by excessive use of normal channels of complaint', and the alarming catch-all, 'those who for other reasons are at odds with prison authorities'.

As ever the solution to the problems posed by such prisoners is draconian — each closed prison should have its own control unit. Though fashionably termed a 'time-out' unit, containment could be indefinite: 'It is felt that it would be unrealistic to try to lay down any minimum or maximum period for removal from the mainstream.'

'Subversive' prisoners will be put through programmes of behaviour modification — termed 'management programmes', and run by clinical psychologists. Ethically dubious, these practices were first put into effect at HM Prison, Wakefield in 1974. At the time the Home Office circular stated that 'there is no expectation that it will cure prisoners of wanting to stir up trouble; only demonstrate to them that it does not pay them to do so'. The Wakefield unit closed in 1976 after prolonged public criticism.

A similar national unit is now proposed for Perth prison, where 'the facilities would be more restrictive than those available to the prisoner in his normal prison'. In addition the notorious 'cages' at Inverness will remain, as will the segregation block '10 cell unit' at Peterhead.

Only last year (in a hitherto unpublished doctoral thesis) one of the members of the working party, Dr Andrew Coyle — the privately outspoken Governor of Greenock Prison, and Chair of the Scottish Prison Governors' Association — attacked centralised Scottish prison administration and the 'anonymous but far reaching power wielded by Scottish Office officials without discerning political scrutiny'. 'Responsible,' says Coyle, 'for many of the present difficulties facing the prison service.' The whole basis of prison administration is wrong. Preferring judicial control, Coyle argues, 'the natural home of the prison system is not within the Civil Service, but rather as one element in the criminal justice system.'

COYLE'S ARGUMENTS are supported in a second unpublished Edinburgh University thesis, also submitted by a Scottish Assistant Governor (since resigned). In a comprehensive survey of the attitudes of all Scottish Prison psychiatrists, the following interview with a prison psychiatrist is recorded verbatim: 'It's my impression, and the impression of my colleagues, that the power, such as it is, is kept close to a very few people. It's very hierarchical, and the people who have power are not really looking for advice. When you seek to advise, it seems to me it's something of an embarrassment . . . They'd rather you beavered at the coal face and didn't interfere too much with what's going on.'

Prefer a sticky end

Another interviewee clearly shares the views of those on the rooftops: 'I think it's the nature of the system. People in authority are not to be trusted . . . all I have encountered within the prison service are lies.' Cynicism towards the Prison Department runs deep — 'I get the feeling,' says another psychiatrist 'that the success of the Barlinnie unit . . . has been something of an embarrassment to the prison administration and they would have been much happier if the whole thing had come to a sticky end.'

It seems inevitable that the proposals of the working party will win the day. Malcolm Rifkind and the Scottish Office have been at pains to emphasise that responsibility for 'riots' is to be placed at the cell doors 'of 50 bad men' — an unrepresentative hard core of difficult and subversive prisoners set on disruption and destruction.

Rehabilitation has bitten the dust — the best we can do, according to Coyle, is to try to see 'that no one leaves the system worse than they went in'. Alistair Thompson, director of the Scottish Prison Service, insists that Scottish prisons are successful — no one escapes, he told a recent conference.

Meanwhile, as calls for a public enquiry into the state of Scottish prisons mount, we can take consolation from the Secretary of State's preface to the report on the last inspection at Peterhead prison (29.4.85): 'I am gratified that HM Chief Inspector found much to commend and that he found no matters of major importance on which he felt it necessary to make recommendations'. □

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ECONOMICS

There is no alternative

David Cobham

FROM THE MID-1970s to the early 1980s the main focus of left-wing thinking on economic policy was the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). This was a wide-ranging package of policies, devised as an alternative to the economic policies being pursued by Denis Healey as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Wilson-Callaghan government, but later promoted as an alternative to the policies of the Thatcher government. In the last few years, however, the AES has largely disappeared from political debate.

As Labour Shadow Chancellor, Roy Hattersley has been developing a number of ideas and initiatives. Some of these make a ritual genuflection to the old AES, but his package as a whole is fundamentally different. Meanwhile the hard left has been preoccupied with other issues, not least its own survival, and the soft left has also paid little attention to economic policy. Thus the disappearance of the AES has been more by default than by explicit repudiation. It has occurred under the impact of political pressures — the changes imposed by the Thatcher government, and the Labour leadership's move towards the centre — rather than in the light of a widely understood economic analysis of the failings of the AES. And it is part of a more general problem in the left's thinking: while traditional left-wing ideas in a number of areas have been carefully 'revised', particularly by eurocommunists, there has been very little serious revision of economic theory and policy on the left outside the ranks of professional economists.

One important attempt to reopen the AES debate was an article by Sam Aaronovitch in *Marxism Today* (February 1986). Aaronovitch discussed the implications for the AES of the changes in the UK and world economies and in the balance of political forces which have 'greatly increased the constraints' on economic policy. He also considered four 'critiques' of the AES: 1) the view that the AES was too centralising or 'statist'; 2) the view that it ignored environmental considerations; 3) the view that the AES was insular in orientation and paid insufficient attention to the interdependence between the UK and other economies; and 4) the view that the AES did not recognise the needs of women. He then argued for a new strategy based on new priorities and on an awareness of the increased constraints.

It is remarkable that with the partial exception of the third view all of these four critiques derive from political preferences, from disagreements about ends rather than about the adequacy of the means proposed to attain them. At no point in his article did Aaronovitch question the economic theory or analysis underlying the AES. His re-evaluation of it — and his call for the abandonment of the label though not all of the content of the AES — therefore remains limited and half-hearted.

This lack of a comprehensive and explicit repudiation of the AES is potentially dangerous. It means that the economic policies adopted by the Labour leadership, however sensible in themselves, have not been communicated clearly or persuasively enough to the rank and file of the labour movement, where vague support for the old AES is still widespread. That means that false hopes and illusions may persist, which are liable to create disappointments and tensions within the Labour Party in the event of the new policies being implemented by any future Labour government, even if the policies succeed in their rather limited objectives. The potential for cries of 'betrayal' remains, and there can be no doubt that plenty of people will be waiting for the chance to raise them.

However, in many ways the present is a very suitable time for an explicit rejection of the AES. In popular and political terms this amounts to an acceptance of substantial constraints on the freedom of manoeuvre and on the scope for quick improvements in economic performance which would face a new Labour government. Yet, after seven years of a government endlessly repeating that the constraints are absolute, the message that they are substantial and governments can do only a little is a hopeful and positive one.

> ***Now is a suitable time for an explicit rejection of the AES, accepting that there are substantial constraints on the scope for quick improvements in economic performance which would face a new Labour government. Yet, after seven years of a government endlessly repeating that the constraints are absolute, the message that governments can only do a little is a positive one***

IN MORE TECHNICAL terms there are (at least) three areas where the AES needs to be rejected. First, it involved a major reflation of demand via increases in government expenditure, transfer payments and wages; this was supposed to restore full employment while any undesirable side-effects on prices and the balance of payments were blocked off by price and import controls. It needs to be said that this was always an extraordinarily optimistic assumption about the power of such policies, even in the low inflation, fixed exchange rate world of the 1960s. In the present world economic context it is simply absurd.

Moreover, this is not a question of Keynesians versus monetarists since that divide no longer adequately characterises the differences of opinion among macroeconomists. In the UK a large majority of macroeconomists would reject both the New Classical arguments which provide the nearest thing to an intellectual justification for the policies of the present government, and the extreme Keynesian thinking which does the same for the old AES. In simple terms, majority opinion considers that expansionary demand policies could reduce unemployment not by nothing and not by three million, but by between, say, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $1\frac{1}{4}$ million. At the same time, some of the more detailed issues of demand management policy, such as monetary targeting and the disincentive effects of taxation, need to be taken into account much more carefully than they were in the AES.

Second, one of the main results of academic discussion on privatisation has been the view that the ownership of companies is much less important than the competition and regulation to which an industry is subject — this makes privatisation irrelevant as an instrument for improving economic performance, but of course it does the same for nationalisation. At the same time serious academic work on planning has emphasised the difficulties and played down the potential benefits of planning in mixed economies. In other words there is an economic as well as a political case against large-scale nationalisation, and there are no great benefits waiting just around the corner from the programme of nationalisation plus planning envisaged in the old AES.

Third, while the AES tended to regard the outside world as a nuisance which should be excluded as far as possible, economic analysis suggests that there would be large long-term costs to doing this, but that it cannot be done anyway — whatever the exchange rate regime, whatever controls are used (excluding the possibility of complete autarky). Economic analysis also suggests that the alleged loss of sovereignty involved in UK membership of the European Community and even of the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System is small, while the potential benefits are significant.

There are three possible reactions to the above points. One is to ignore them and carry on as before; the dangers of this course are obvious. The second is to take them on board but try to incorporate them into a 'revisionist' or 'gradualist' AES. The trouble is that such a package is barely differentiable from the kind of policies pursued under other names by the centre and right of the Labour Party, the Alliance and even the left of the Conservative Party. The third possible reaction is explicitly to repudiate the illusion that the left can offer a significantly different economic policy, particularly in the short run.

This last course is obviously embarrassing for those who wish to emphasise the uniqueness of the left to solve current problems. But it is the most honest, and it might facilitate the kind of negotiations and compromises required from the leadership and from the rank and file, in the (not unlikely) event of a hung parliament in which the Labour Party was compelled to embark on the construction of a coalition. □

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Another £400 million, please

The options are narrowing for Austin Rover, the stubbornly unsuccessful British car manufacturer.* KAREL WILLIAMS *and* COLIN HASLAM *argue it needs a government prepared to intervene in the marketplace itself

AUSTIN ROVER (the volume cars division of Rover Group, formerly BL) is in crisis again. The division's operating loss for 1986 will be around £150 million. Home market share for the year slipped a full two points to 16 per cent. Car output, around 380,000 in 1986, was nearly 20 per cent down on the previous year and capacity utilisation fell towards 50 per cent. The new corporate plan which the government has been considering since before Christmas grapples with these problems and will probably solve them by further manning cuts.

The company is now asking for a cash injection of £400 million from the government to cover losses and fund further investment. Honda may be offered a minority equity stake in Austin Rover if it agrees to cover more of the development costs of AR 8, a joint venture replacement for the Maestro. Even so there must be cutbacks in the new model programme and the Metro will be revamped rather than replaced. Redundancy is inevitable and plant closure likely, with persistent leaks and rumours about the future of Cowley South works.

We have of course been this way before. The current crisis and the 1987 corporate plan produced by the new chairman, Graham Day, echo an earlier crisis and the 'recovery strategy' implemented by the then chairman, Michael Edwardes, in the 1977 to 1983 period. Why then is the cars division still in a mess and does the new plan stand any better chance of success than the old strategy? And, what are the policy options for the cars division and the government?

Market led failure

The continuing problems of the cars division can no longer be blamed on the workforce. Management sorted out this problem in the early 1980s when they imposed reformed work practices. That reform has not solved the company's problems because hourly labour costs originally accounted for less than 15 per cent of production costs and because labour productivity was market constrained. The company cannot sell all the cars which the workforce could build and divisional labour productivity is now a modest 9 cars per man year.

If management was irrationally obsessed with the labour problem, the Edwardes team also made poor decisions in a number of other areas, particularly on the choice of new technology and export markets. The media hyped the automated Metro body shop at Longbridge as a symbol of industrial modernisation. But this dedicated inflexible facility has never made any money for the company and in recent years has been running below 40 per cent of capacity. This is partly because management under Edwardes retreated from export markets and never undertook investment in overseas distribution. Under Edwardes after 1977 Austin Rover pulled out of the United States and export volumes to the EEC declined by 50 per cent to just 70,000 units.

Selling the new Rover 800 in the United States is a belated move in the right direction. But Austin Rover's fate has been, and will be, settled by its success or failure in the British home market where three-quarters or more of its production is sold. Under Edwardes, the division aimed to take a substantial 20 per cent plus of the home market with a compact range of just three models — Metro, Maestro and Montego — which were introduced between 1980 and 1984. The target was not achieved because of the shift to what we call 'full line direct competition'.

> ***'The continuing problems of Austin Rover can no longer be blamed on the workforce . . . The company cannot sell all the cars which the workforce could build'***

That is why the old Edwardes strategy of 'product led recovery' did not succeed and turned into market-led failure. Graham Day's new corporate plan simply adjusts to that failure. The company's dealers have already been told that Austin Rover does not aim to take more than 16 per cent of the market in 1987. Metro, Maestro and Montego will not claim more than 12.5 per cent of the market. Low volume models like the Rover 213 and Rover 800, which have been jointly developed with Honda, account for the rest.

Small-scale mass production

If the cars division has failed, the government will not liquidate Austin Rover. That is politically out of the question in an election year when the Tories must win marginal constituencies in the Midlands. Liquidation would also be an economic nonsense when we face a payments crisis. Suppose the cars division was closed and its output of all British Metros, Maestros and Montegos was replaced with imports, the balance of trade in manufactures would deteriorate by more than £1 billion.

Day's alternative plan is to follow the market down in a cars division which does not have the resources to develop new models, even after the government has provided an extra £400 million. In this situation the company can only become an offshore assembly platform for Honda. This solution may restore profitability. But from a broader social point of view the price is high in terms of employment, value added and technical capability.

After a retreat into assembly, the cars division will not need anything like its present workforce of 41,000. The Day option also has a payments cost because, if Austin Rover assembles Hondas, up to half the value added will be imported from Japan. There are also knock-on effects on component suppliers and on technical capability in areas like engine design and capability. Austin Rover plans to develop a new K series engine which will replace the ancient A series engine that powers the Metro. But, in the longer term, the rest of its engine requirements will be imported.

No doubt, the Labour front bench will use these arguments in parliamentary debate on the new Day plan. Like his predecessors over the past ten years, John Smith will probably take the line that the State should put in more money to maintain the status quo in the cars division. But this does not face up to the real problem or the difficult choices which Labour would have to make in office.

In the Austin Rover story since 1977, the real villains are not the workers or managers but Labour and Tory politicians. They provided more than £1 billion of public money between 1977 and 1982 without taking any responsibility for the product market in which the company could not earn a profit. The pattern is repeated in other nationalised industries like steel and coal, where the government funded large-scale investment in the 1970s without safeguarding the market. In Labour's recent document on social ownership there is no sign that the lessons of this tragic experience have been taken on board.

If the market is the problem, it must be recognised that the policy options are limited because Austin Rover is now a small-scale producer of mass market cars. The cars division has a nominal capacity of 750,000 units and is currently making fewer than 40,000 cars a year. These volumes will not cover the renewal costs of developing new models which a full line producer like Ford of Europe estimates at $500 million a year. The only credible alternative to assembly is licensed manufacture, which is more desirable because it saves jobs, eases the payments constraint and preserves manufacturing capability.

Austin Rover loses sales because it is virtually excluded from the fleet market where the Montego is no more successful than its predecessors. (It has taken a 3.3 per cent share against a projected 6 per cent.) But, until the late 1970s, this exclusion was part of a comfortable pattern of limited and indirect competition between the two major companies. Ford sold large rear-wheel-drive cars, like the Escort and Cortina, to business users: Austin sold small front-wheel-drive cars, like the Mini and 1100/Allegro, to private buyers.

This stand-off ended in the late 1970s when the product planners of the major European car companies all decided to chase sales by offering a competitive model in each market class. Austin Rover was most affected by Ford's decision to enter the small car class for the first time with the

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The new Rover 800 — can it take the US by storm?

new Fiesta in 1976. Competition in the British market was further intensified by the renaissance of Vauxhall/GM which emerged as a third major when it more or less doubled its market share to 16 per cent in the early 1980s.

The pattern of full line direct competition was completed in 1984 when Austin Rover re-entered the medium class with the Montego. Since then, the three majors have each offered a competitive model in the three main market classes. The table shows their line-up of directly competing models which virtually monopolise the top ten sales positions. The market share figures show that the inevitable result was market fragmentation as volume sales were split three ways.

	1986
Small Class	**Market Share %**
Ford Fiesta	7.7
Austin Metro	5.8
Vauxhall Nova	2.6
Light class	
Ford Escort/Orion	11.2
Austin Maestro	2.8
Vauxhall Astra	4.3
Medium class	
Ford Sierra	6.0
Austin Montego	3.3
Vauxhall Cavalier	6.0

Source: SMMT Statistics, first 11 months 1986

The market share which can be claimed by one model is inevitably reduced. With indirect competition up to 1981, the old Ford Cortina was unchallenged in the medium class and usually sold 10 per cent of the market. The Sierra which replaced the Cortina never enjoyed this success. With direct competition after 1981 volume sales in the medium class were divided between Ford's Sierra and Vauxhall's Cavalier. As the table shows, only the Ford Escort (with its booted variant, Orion) retains the old 10 per cent magic and a position of class dominance.

Direct competition also limits the market share which can be claimed by a compact model range of three volume sellers. The average best seller from a major now claims just 5 per cent of the British market. Austin Rover does badly because, in the light and medium classes, its models came a poor third in sales terms. But, even if Austin Rover's product and distribution were stronger, the division would be unlikely to take more than 20 per cent of the market with three models. Three times five equals 15, not 22.

A radical Labour government would also appreciate that the broader problem is the decline of the car industry in Britain rather than the future of the one major producer which happens to be State-owned. It could back the national power train strategy which Garel Rhys proposed last year. There is no reason why small Fords and Austins should not have the same British designed and manufactured engine under their bonnets. This is a way back into full manufacture for a country in the later stages of de-industrialisation.

However, if licensed manufacture or a more radical industrial strategy is to work, the government must take some responsibility for the car market. The problem is not the level but the composition of demand. This could be most easily changed by some form of tax preference on company cars which are 80 per cent or more British in content. The discrimination would work in favour of Austin Metros, Maestros and Montegos from Longbridge and Cowley and in favour of Ford Fiestas, Escorts and Sierras from Halewood and Dagenham.

This kind of value added content regulation would benefit the British car industry as much as Austin Rover. The new policy would halt the drift towards a dispersed assembly industry and preserve a concentrated manufacturing base with strong backward linkages to the component industry. Austin Rover's market share would be raised, capacity utilisation would improve and the profit would come through. And that result can be obtained by a relatively small adjustment in a national car market where around 1.9 million new cars were sold in 1986. In 1985 it was disclosed that Longbridge and Cowley cannot break even at a trading level (without covering depreciation) if output falls below 435,000. At the same time, the company claimed that, if these two plants made 650,000 cars, the division could cover depreciation and finance new investment.

No doubt by retreating into assembly Graham Day can find profit at lower output levels. But that sacrifices broader social and economic objectives in terms of employment, the balance of payments and technical capability. Only value added content regulation can secure profitability and safeguard these broader objectives. □

The argument of this article is developed at greater length in a forthcoming book: The breakdown of Austin Rover *by K. Williams, J. Williams and C. Haslam; Berg £5.95 (23 January). Karel Williams teaches at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth and Colin Haslam at North East London Polytechnic.*

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ANC

No easy walk at 75

GREAT confidence and even jollity marked the 75th anniversary celebrations of the African National Congress last week. The message emerging from the world's capitals where commemorative events were being staged was that the ANC is the organisation which speaks for the majority of South Africans *and* the one which will lead the country to democratic freedom.

Founded in 1912, the ANC can claim to be the longest-established liberation movement in the African continent, but it remains the one most notable for *not* having achieved its aims.

Its 75th anniversary now finds it in sight of victory, but difficult obstacles remain. These essentially boil down to two problems Chief Gatsha Buthelezi; and the young radicals in the townships.

When the ANC, was initially formed, it had to overcome the tribal differences which weakened African attempts to resist white supremacist constitutional moves in the wake of the Anglo/Boer war. Today it once again faces an ostensibly tribal divide. Just what should it do about the Zulus, and particularly their mercurial leader, Chief Buthelezi?

There are signs that the nature and the scale of the Buthelezi problem are changing. In the past he may have sent out signals that he was prepared to accept deals which the ANC would never countenance, but in response to his own followers' militancy he is now much less accommodating with Pretoria. He now insists that Nelson Mandela should be released and talks opened with the ANC.

Buthelezi's paramilitary 'Inkatha' movement is also less threatening today to the ANC. The displaced, and often isolated, male Zulu workers who form the backbone of the organisation, are becoming more radicalised. Indeed some of the recent labour disputes in the Transvaal mines, saw a breakdown of those traditional loyalties. It is now doubtful whether Buthelezi could make any effective call to action from the migrant workers he once commanded. This might be encouraging for the ANC, who refuse to sit down with Buthelezi at any future talks, unless he is on the government side of the table. Nonetheless he will surely remain a difficulty.

A thornier and more urgent problem is the rising militancy of the 'comrades'. ANC inside the country has attempted to exert some guiding influence on them, but even so the necklacing goes on. Also, the ANC's own people, as the leadership has admited, have been involved in some of the ugly scenes of retribution. The military Chief of Staff, Joe Slovo told me recently 'We don't believe a struggle is fought by the motivation of revenge.' But in almost the same breath he pointed out; 'There's no prospect of any centralised leadership being able to direct every action on every street corner.' In this two-handed position Slovo, a Communist, is at one with his President Oliver Tambo, a Christian, who has made it clear that necklacing plays no part in ANC policy, although he recognises the local situations that can lead to it.

Similar difficulties arise with the guerrilla fighting of Umkonto We Sizwe or MK. This is the ANC's military wing, currently celebrating its 25th anniversary. One of MK's members was recently hanged for planting a bomb in a supermarket which killed five people. It was, he said in court, a personal reprisal for a South African Defence Force raid into Lesotho.

All this raises the question of how organisationally effective the ANC's presence is inside the country. In the current turmoil it is obviously impossible to make any sure judgement from the outside about ANC/MK's lines of communication. But it does seem that the 'embryonic' internal structure which Oliver Tambo admitted to in 1985 has been improved.

Controlling excesses of violence is one thing, giving political leadership in this context is quite another. It will not be easy to create a genuine 'people's army' which is as politically aware as it is disciplined and effective. It will involve cementing stronger relations with all the self-defence groups, local trade unions and street committees which have sprung up. These relations will have to have their military dimension.

It all confirms the simple truth of one of the ANC's more sobering slogans, 'No Easy Walk To Freedom'.

David Tereshchuk

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Sanctions without discrimination

THE BRITISH celebrated the ANC's 75th anniversary with a sectarian wrangle over amendments to its constitution — the first major changes proposed since the movement was founded in 1959. The new rules are designed partly to accommodate the mushrooming of local Anti-Apartheid groups (trebled in number in two years), but will also restrict attendance at future AGMs to representatives from groups and member organisations, whereas until now any individual member was entitled to be present. This allowed the City of London Anti-Apartheid group (dominated by the Revolutionary Communist Group and officially expelled from the movement two years ago) to pack the AGM with its supporters.

The RCG refused to be routed without a fight, and the result was semi-permanent uproar. At one point a black South African trade unionist and ANC member, Sipho Pityana, had to shame the hecklers into silence by simply observing, 'I believe the cause for which the people of South Africa are dying is more important than the row over motion 16'. Bob Hughes, MP for Aberdeen North and chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, got a rough ride for having signed a letter to the *Scotsman* last July appealing to black African states not to boycott the Commonwealth Games in the interests of the Scottish people. The RCG repeatedly called for his resignation, but the AGM contented inself with censure of a milder kind and reaffirmed its confidence in Hughes by electing him as chairman for another year.

Activists were encouraged by Barclays' decision to sell off its subsidiary in South Africa, though they will continue the boycott as long as Barclays retains financial links with South Africa. Their next target is Shell, which violates the UN and EEC embargoes on oil exports. And to reinforce pressure for comprehensive and effective sanctions against South Africa and Namibia, Anti-Apartheid has produced a 'Manifesto for Sanctions', which it hopes to use in challenging the allegiances of parliamentary candidates in the coming general election campaign.

But the movement could be in for some adverse publicity over the sensitive issue of the two-way cultural boycott. An emergency resolution unanimously approved the picketing of *The Bijers Sunbird* at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, and *Bhopa*, playing at the Cottesloe on tour from the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. Mike Terry, General Secretary of Anti-Apartheid, maintains that you cannot apply the boycott selectively, however good the play's intentions. The AGM also called upon local councils 'to make funding of cultural organisations conditional on their implementation of the boycott'. You can almost feel the liberal hackles rising in the cold air of political commitment.

Kirsty Milne

VIVE LA GREVE

The year of 'ras-le-bol'?

Paris

RECALLING THE doomed past months from the terrorists' attacks in autumn to the railway strike in winter, with the students' protest in the interval — Parisians are uneasy about the future. What next? Hands are raised to show helplessness.

However, were these past events as unrelated as they may seem? The terrorists' bombings have left a lingering fear in the country, partly sustained by the bag searches still operating in stores and municipal buildings. This general anxiety is not totally alien to the students' movement. If you're prodded when you're uncomfortable, then you bare your teeth. This provides an explanation for the spontaneity with which the youthful rebellion spread across the nation. In the warmth of comradeship, individual insecurity is replaced by the soothing feeling of solidarity, brought to fever pitch in the heat of battle. It was greatly helped by the lyrical coverage of the media, whipping up consciences, forbidding interest to lapse, causing contagious excitement. Feelings were shared that the martyrdom of the young man killed by police deserved a nobler cause than the cancellation of the educational reform bill. But the cause is still to be found, despite professionals' efforts to politicise the movement.

An occasion for the discontent to spread came as salary reforms were to be imposed on railway workers. A movement of protest spotaneously surfaced among the young workers. Like the students, they refused new differentials,

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preferring to nurse the illusion of equality. The movement surprised political analysts by its resilience. Social outcry seized the country. Miners at Carmaux stopped work, and so did sailors and dockers from Marseilles to Nantes. Electricity workers shut down some power stations. Even the Comédie Française was on strike on 30 December.

Should this widespread expression of dissatisfaction be seen as having deep political significance? A number of Socialists are already forecasting a sweeping victory in the near future. Their opponents accuse them of 'throwing fat on the fire'. However, optimism in that sense may prove disappointing in the long run; evaluating the political situation only through recent events may lead to false conclusions. Chirac's government was elected with a narrow margin of 52 per cent and has already disappointed its supporters, but not dramatically more than any previous government after only a few months in power.

Haughty General de Gaulle had the utmost scorn for what he called the French people's ficklesness in immediately turning against whomever they elect. Have the Socialists fared better in the public's eyes? Apart from François Mitterrand, who soared above recent events as a father-figure, the Socialists haven't yet aroused any renewed political interest. The number of trade-unionists is still dwindling to a small 8 per cent despite strong efforts now to rally members.

When the Socialists came back to power after 25 years' absence, they carried with them the dreams and hopes of fervent supporters. By 1983, two years after the elections, they had managed to disappoint nearly everyone. Constantly hesitating between left- and right-wing policies before finally choosing an ineffective 'middle-of-the-road' position. They created a general lack of confidence: unemployment rose to two million; scandals, like the *Rainbow Warrior,* blurred the righteous image the left wanted to convey; the failures to keep the price increases with the rate of inflation caused a sharp fall in the standard of living. This last cause, added to all the others, has certainly fuelled today's social unrest.

For the moment, more than a political awakening, the French are now expressing the pent-up frustrations of those last years and are venting them in a propitious atmosphere. The Socialists, if they come back, cannot perform miracles. The frustrations now released will still need a cure. The French have an expression for this mixture of uncomfortable feelings: 'ras-le-bol' ('fed up to the ears').

Yet morale was, for the moment, high. Radio stations began their programmes with 'Vive la Grève . . .' ('Hail to the strike'). 1987 has started as the year of 'Ras-le-bol'. Vive le 'Ras-le-bol'.

Yvette Marin

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SCIENCE CRITIC

Rent a Brit and arm the heavens

Maurice Goldsmith

I HAD NO DOUBTS that the government would reject Nimrod in favour of AWACS. That decision is of a pattern with the crisis in British science. We are becoming a type of third-world country, with a brainpower resource we can no longer harness, but which for the moment is still in inertial supply and readily available for exploitation elsewhere.

I refer to our qualified scientists and engineers, unable to be used at home, who are leaving for the USA at the rate of about 1,000 a year. I would not be surprised if they were among those who have developed AWACS. The cruel comment heard in Washington is, 'If you want some basic research done, you can always rent a Brit'.

But the AWACS decision is only a first step to a future development in which we may be linked up with technological forces which will determine that our concepts of democracy and the British way-of-life will be obliged to disappear.

I pray that I exaggerate, but the early warning signs are already here for those who want to see them.

> ***'The impact of Star Wars on the scientific community is profound. The ethic of open communication begins to close'***

The advanced industrialised countries are becoming more militarised. For instance, the French government has approved an increase of 6 per cent a year in spending on equipment for the armed forces over the next five years. At the end of the period defence spending is to account for nearly 4 per cent of GNP, compared with 3.66 per cent in 1986. The annual British government investment in R&D is £4,300m, of which 51 per cent is channelled into the Ministry of Defence. By contrast, the share of the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI), a principal source of industrial research funds, is to fall from 7.9 per cent of the total government grant in 1983-84 to an estimated 5.2 per cent in 1988-89.

The US Federal R&D budget is dominated by Defense. In 1985, it accounted for 70 per cent of federal R&D monies, but most went for expensive weapons such as stealth aircraft and Trident submarines: basic research received 2.6 per cent. From 1982-85, the first four years of Reagan's military buildup, federal outlays for defence were $922bn in constant 1985 dollars. This included a great increase in spending for military R&D from $20.3bn (1985 dollars) in 1981 to $30.4bn in 1985. During that period government outlays for non-military R&D fell from $20.6bn to $16.9bn (1985 dollars).

Department of Defense support of university research in 1975 provided 8.4 per cent of the total federal R&D funds: in 1986, it was 16.7 per cent. However, the largest contributor to increases in military R&D is the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or Star Wars. The Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger is now asking Congress for an urgent grant of $110 million to allow study of a new type of rocket system to lift payloads of 50-75 tons, far beyond the 32-ton maximum of the space shuttle. He has asked, also, for an additional $2.8 billion in the 1987 defense budget, which already has $289.4 billion.

The US efforts in space have become identified mainly with military programmes. Since the days when the Americans were the first men to put feet on the moon, the space race has been used to give legitimacy to the militarisation of the USA. This is what the SDI expresses. Today the military spend twice as much as NASA does on space: the NASA budget is about $7.5bn compared with the military space budget of about $15bn.

The impact of SDI on the scientific community is profound. The traditional ethics and ethos of independence and open communication begin to close. Equally important, the young scientist is in danger of becoming 'co-ordinated' as he sees his future dependent on his accepting that military research with its special constraints is the scientific norm.

The Federation of American Scientists, known for its opposition to SDI, which it describes as the 'most dramatic example of misplaced R&D resources', states that Star Wars is resulting in a substantial diversion of scientific and technical effort away from the creation of new civilian products and new productive technology. For instance, the huge new Mirror Fusion Test Facility, completed at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory at a cost of some $360m, was put into mothballs on the very day it was dedicated in February 1986. It sits idle, and the operating costs are diverted for military R&D. But the displaced fusion researchers can find immediate local employment in research on particle-beam weapons.

Many scientists are prepared to accept SDI as a necessary defence arrangement in a divided political world. They are prepared to accept this 'passive' use of space — spy satellites, for example — as having a deterrent effect. But as defence officials have stated they may use the proposed US-European manned orbiting space station to develop Star Wars weapons and there are proposals to set up an American missile factory on the moon — so Shimon Peres, when Israeli Prime Minister, was told — what is there to prevent SDI becoming SOI, a Space Offensive Initiative, as Johan Galtung has suggested? That would mean the deployment of weapons in orbit, and the active military use of space. □

Dr Maurice Goldsmith is director of the International Science Policy Foundation. His column marks the beginning of regular coverage of science and technology in the NS.

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Affection for Uncle Sam

Sparked off by* The Special Relationship, *essays edited by William Roger Lewis and the late Hedley Bull (Oxford University Press, £35, 408 pp),* GODFREY HODGSON *reflects on the real extent of Britain's dependence on a friendly USA — and argues that while 250,000 Labour activists might see some appeal in anti-Americanism, the 10-12 million voters needed to get Labour into power won't

Macmillan and Kennedy: by now the relationship was only special for one partner — Britain

THERE IS MUCH TALK in the United States of anti-Americanism in Britain. It is curious that this should be so at a time when eight of our round dozen national newspapers — *The Times, Sunday Times, Sun, News of the World, Mail, Mail on Sunday, Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* — are owned by managements, in each case with North American connections, which do not permit serious criticism of the United States or of its present administration in their pages.

In the circumstances, it is tempting for *NS* readers to dismiss the failure of Neil Kinnock's mission-impossible to the United States before Christmas to explain Labour's defence policy as yet another victim of the machinations of the Tory press. It is also a reflex action for many Labour supporters, at a time when Labour's defence policy has been so disingenuously criticised in those Tory newspapers, to leap to its defence as a matter of loyalty.

The temptations, I suggest, should be resisted. Neil Kinnock's visit to the United States was not so much a disaster as a non-event. But it did expose a serious weakness in Labour's foreign policy: the lack of a credible and realistic strategy for dealing with the most important single relationship Britain must manage in the world: that with the United States.

Neil Kinnock's friends may try to assert that the journey was worthwhile, and that behind closed doors influential Americans were reassured and even converted by the Labour leader's charm and talent. I don't believe it. My sources, who include some very influential and very well-disposed people, told me just the opposite in the course of a recent visit to New York and Washington.

In any case, the chief effect of Neil Kinnock's visit seems to have been to focus attention on what Labour's defence policy is. And the plain fact is that Americans — I mean sophisticated, influential, Anglophile Americans, Democrats as well as Republicans, liberals as well as conservatives — simply can't believe it. They are unanimous. If Labour, in power, were to demand the withdrawal of American bases, American public opinion would take it as a gratuitous insult; as indistinguishable from neutralism; as the signal for the unravelling of the Western alliance; and so as the cue for unilateral American withdrawals from NATO on a substantial scale.

I have no idea whether Neil Kinnock understands how difficult relations with the United States would be on the basis of the party's official policy. Nor do I have any inside information about how much he and those around him mind about their relations with Washington. It is, though — I suggest — high time they thought harder and more deeply than they seem to have done about the real nature of Britain's relationship with America. In short, Labour not only needs a defence policy. If it is to become credible as a party of government in Britain, and even more if, once in power, it is to be able to manage its most delicate and important foreign relationship, it needs an American policy.

THIS IS NOT going to be a plea for the 'special relationship' of myth and memory. The collection of essays edited by the Australian-born Oxford scholar Hedley Bull, who died last year, and his American colleague William Roger Louis, establishes that cherished piece of sentimentality for what it was: an historical episode in the decline of British and the rise of American power.

'It would not be too much to say,' writes Professor Sir Michael Howard in an essay in this excellent volume, 'that the "Special Relationship" was the creation of Winston Churchill, and that if it survives at all in the United States it does so mainly because of his memory.' True, I will argue; and not altogether true. For Churchill, half-American and wholly imperialist as he was, the essence of that relationship was that 'the United States would accept and underwrite Britain's status as a co-equal world power,' making up for any shortfall in Britain's economic power in return for British political skills and historical wisdom. It was, as Professor Howard comments drily, 'a view shared by many Englishmen at the time, but by curiously few Americans.'

Until 1917, indeed, Britain and the United States had thought of one another politically, when they thought of one another as nations at all, as adversaries. During World War II, many, perhaps most Americans, saw the British Empire as a rival. Even in 1945, many influential Americans, including specifically both Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, saw Britain as at least as dangerous an enemy for American democratic ideals as Soviet Russia. Not only the isolationist right, but the American left too, were suspicious

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of monarchist, inegalitarian, imperial Britain. (Conversely, as Max Beloff has pointed out, throughout the nineteenth century it was the British left which admired America as the land of liberty and equality, while the Tories despised Americans as uncouth levellers.) 'The first thing that must strike anyone who thinks objectively about the Anglo-American relationship,' writes David Watt in his introduction to this volume, 'is the contrast between its coolness for most of its duration and warmth in modern times. The general American image of the British for 150 years was of a nation of more or less menacing snobs.'

The special relationship, as writers here from such different backgrounds as the Cambridge historian David Reynolds, Professor Margaret Gowing, the historian of the British atomic energy programme, and the former Polaris commander Sir James Eberle agree, began as a set of entirely pragmatic deals, done in the desperate circumstances of world war, and continued as a set of habits in the face of the perceived dangers of the Cold War.

To begin with, the deals were done on a relatively equal basis. Britain needed American help, certainly. But the United States, too, confronted by the prospect of a solitary battle against German and Japanese militarism if Britain collapsed, needed Britain: in particular, the Royal Navy and British bases; the assets of British intelligence (as Anthony Cave Brown documented in his life of 'Wild Bill' Donovan, the head of OSS, which was the war-time precursor of the CIA); and Britain's homegrown and refugee nuclear scientists.

By 1945, as David Reynolds shows, the special relationship was one-sided to the point of reciprocal embarrassment. By Suez — if it meant an alliance between two powers of more or less equal status — it was a fiction. By the time Macmillan and Kennedy met at Nassau in the Bahamas to discuss replacing one American missile (Skybolt) with another (Polaris) as the instrument for Britain's 'independent' nuclear deterrent, it was a vestige, and a vestige it has remained ever since.

SO MUCH for the 'special relationship' in the sense in which Winston Churchill conceived it, Harold Macmillan used it, and two generations of British diplomats, academics and Establishment journalists have kept its flickering flame alight. Yet because Britain and the United States do not have a 'special relationship' on anything approaching an equal basis, because asymmetry characterises every aspect of the Anglo-American alliance, that does not mean that the relationship is to be dismissed as unimportant. Quite the opposite.

Labour's policy of expelling all or most American nuclear facilities from Britain simply ignores how dependent Britain has become on the American connection, militarily, economically — and intellectually and emotionally as well.

Polaris, Westland, Trident, AWACS: these are only the best known of the crises brought on by British government's inability to pay for a truly independent military capacity and by British industry's inability to build truly independent systems either for the narrow British market or — in competition with American manufacturers with their Pentagon market behind them — for world markets. Moreover, these same crises have revealed how 'American-minded' senior British military officers are. Comfortable with American colleagues, with whom they share not only a language but also a political philosophy, used to American equipment, and often partially American-trained, Royal Navy and RAF officers in particular instinctively fit into an American-dominated world. They feel uncomfortable with a Europe whose language they rarely even attempt to speak. West Germany may be a more important partner for the US in NATO; the British military would feel dangerously unloved without their American big brother in NATO: a prospect Labour ought to contemplate with real concern.

> ***'In short, Labour not only needs a defence policy. If it is to become credible as a party of government in Britain, it needs an American policy'***

The military relationship is, in a sense, only a special case of the almost inextricably intertwined relations in what might be called the 'software industries'. If the economic history is carefully analysed, it is not a matter — as many people both in Britain and in the US assume — of the United States gradually taking over Britain's place in such crucial activities as banking, insurance, financial and commodity markets, trade, shipping, aviation, international communications, news agencies, underwater cables, news, film, television, advertising, academic research, publishing, commercial entertainment, fashion and commercial sport. Rather, many of these activities have been dominated by Anglo-American condominia since the late nineteenth century.

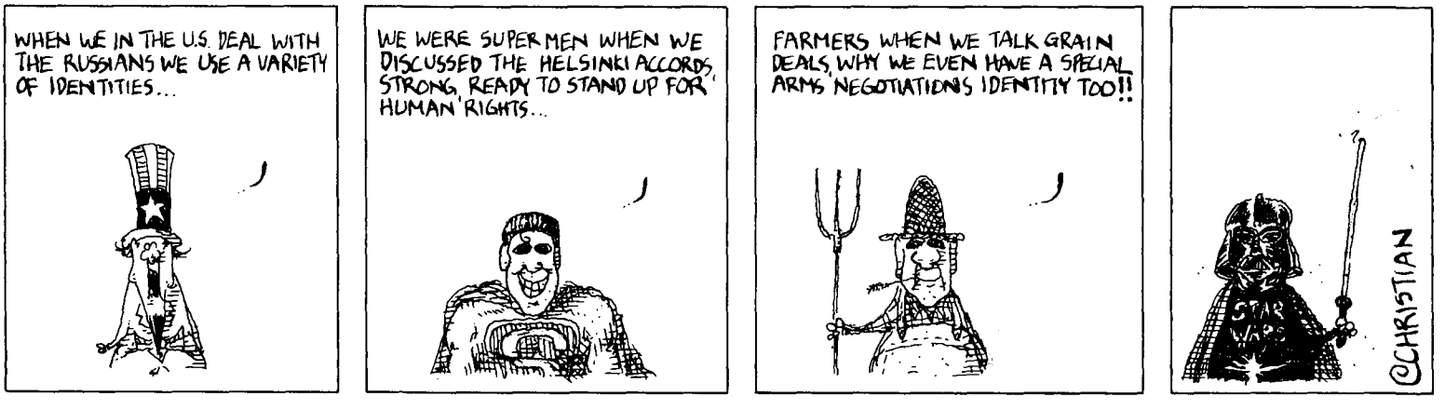
While unquestionably American influence in all these important domains of the world economy and of what might be called the culture of capitalism has grown at the expense of British influence, what is striking is how slowly American predominance has increased. What is remarkable is how strong a junior partner Britain remains in many of these fields, with an influence and a share of the rewards far greater than would be proportionate to the British economy's size or dynamism as compared with the Japanese, German or even French economies.

Any policy seriously intended to cut the British economy off from — for example — American capital, American outlets for British capital, American markets, American outlets for British service industries and cultural products of all kinds, American news, American films and television series, American markets for British 'software' exports, would be so disastrous as to be in practice unthinkable.

Emotionally, too, an anti-American stance is not a practical political policy for the Labour Party. British socialists may find many specific aspects of the American social system unappealing. They may condemn many instances of American foreign policy as wrong. It is quite understandable that British trade unionists, too, object strongly to a British government whose industrial policy appears to consist largely of secret plans for selling publicly-owned British industry to American investors. But a policy of sustained anti-Americanism is not an option for Labour for the simple reason that the United States, its people and the main lines of its society and its aspirations are on the whole as popular with Labour voters as with Conservatives (or even with Alliance supporters).

British voters in the mass do not make the mistake of supposing that the hopes and beliefs of the American people are circumscribed by the ideology of Reaganism. Labour voters are just as likely to admire the America of Martin Luther King and the women's movement, of Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, as to reject the ideals of a Ronald Reagan or a Richard Nixon.

An anti-American policy, in fact, may have a certain appeal for the active Labour party members who have a direct influence on party policy. Are there really as many as 250,000 of them? It will have no attractions for the 10-12 million who will be needed to vote Labour into power. And if Labour's current defence policy is not intended to be anti-American, if that is not its purpose, the fact is that it appears anti-American to the great majority of the people most affected — who are the Americans.


WHEN WE IN THE U.S. DEAL WITH THE RUSSIANS WE USE A VARIETY OF IDENTITIES...
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The truth untold

A new study of Wilfred Owen — poet, soldier, lover — still fails, according to* JONATHAN CUTBILL, *to confront the man face on

IN MEMORIAM
LT. WILFRED OWEN M.C.
2ND MANCHESTER REGIMENT
Born 18 March 1893.
Killed in Action 4 November 1918.
MURDERED 1919-1987.

ON 26 JANUARY 1918 Wilfred Owen's first poem to be accepted for publication, 'Miners', appeared in the *Nation**. Ten months later he was dead. Since then an Owen industry has grown up. We have had numerous 'Owen the Immature Soldier Poet' and Jon Stallworthy, in 1974, gave us 'Owen the Bare Facts'.

In previous writings Dominic Hibberd has tiptoed round Owen's sexuality. Thus in 1973: 'Owen has in some quarters been described as a homosexual, but there is as yet no sound evidence to support such a view. He was certainly late in maturing and was excessively dominated by his mother.'

Now, thinly disguised as *Owen the Poet* (Macmillan, £25 — priced so your servants won't buy it), he gives us 'Owen the Queer'. His language shows his bias. Gay sex is 'illicit', Owen's gay love poetry is 'grotesque', his early sexual development is 'bizarre confusion', gay erotic writings are 'highly obscene' and 'obsessively indecent'. Hibberd has done his homework but shows little knowledge of the way gays lived, spoke and wrote, nor of the worldwide gay community that existed in Owen's day. Thus he destroys what could have been the best book on Owen yet written. In 1970 it might have passed. In 1987 it will not do.

The evidence is all available: *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1985), *Wilfred Owen Selected Letters* (1985) and libraries have Harold Owen's *Journey from Obscurity* (1963-5) and Stallworthy's *Wilfred Owen* (1974). But to read Wilfred's letters and poems it is necessary to understand the constraints under which he writes. It's only 20 years since Oscar Wilde's trials. Poems have to be published, letters get passed around and may be opened by the military censors.

Wilfred solves this problem in several ways. He uses frequent literary references that add to his meaning. He attaches sexual significance to particular words. The most important are *glee, gleam, ghost, laughter* and all its variants, *Greek* of course, *stars, meteors* and all things celestial. Toys, music and musical instruments are also worth attention. Thus Wilfred gives parallel meanings to many of the poems and letters. Usually a 'safe' reading is possible and, in a single letter or poem, the other message is easily missed (or deliberately not seen). It is not code: writing one thing and meaning something else. The two messages interlock and reinforce each other. The full truth is lost unless both are understood.

Before Gay Liberation this kind of writing is second nature to lesbians and gays. Wilfred calls it writing in parables. But he insists that poetry should be based on personal experience: 'I think every poem, and every figure of speech should be a *matter of experience*.' His poems are as much part of his autobiography as his letters. This is why he revised many of the early ones over a long period. We have to credit him with telling the truth.

Wilfred does not have the best start in life for a young gay: an evangelically christian, lower-middle-class family. Shrewsbury's flourishing but very discrete gay scene is beyond his reach, though he would know of it from school gossip. There are no older gays in his family circle to befriend him. His early determination to be a poet, long before he knew he would be a good one, reflects his need for an identity that could be public.

Fifteen months as lay assistant in the parish of Dunsden near Reading expose him to rural poverty, the charms of the stalwart village lads and the hell fire of the vicar. His gay S&M sexuality is now clear in his poems: 'and I learned the name/of that strange, regnant Presence as the Flesh./It bore the naked likeness of a boy'; 'No joy is comparable/Unto the *Melting* — soft and gradual —/*Of Torture's needles in the flesh*'. Clear also is the clash of his natural desires and growing social conscience with his religion and society's morals. The flash point involves a young man in the parish. The details are lost but it would not take much to convince the vicar that Sodom and Gomorrah have come to Dunsden. Sensibly Wilfred departs leaving behind his faith in organised religion. From now on he makes his own decisions.

> ***To read Wilfred's letters and poems it is necessary to understand the constraints under which he writes. It's only 20 years since Oscar Wilde's trials . . . letters get passed around and may be opened by military censors***

Like countless lesbians and gays before and since, Wilfred moves as far away from home as possible — to Bordeaux where he earns his living teaching English and shows no eagerness to return home. Here for the first time he can explore his sexuality, easy in a large seaport. His letters home show him making friends with young men, tactfully avoiding attempts by older men and women to seduce him and generally finding his feet. Friendship with the poet Laurent Tailhade puts him in contact with European gay thought.

Wilfred is out as gay to his mother early on, and her reaction is probably the Edwardian equivalent of 'it's only a phase dear'. Wilfred never gives up trying to get her to see things his way. He uses his parable technique and avoids a major confrontation. By the time he is 20 there is no doubt who is in control of the relationship. He reassures her that he is not misbehaving but points out that this is by his standards, not hers, and quietly goes his own way. In the end her faith in her son wins and she carefully preserved most of his letters.

IN OCTOBER 1915 Wilfred returns to England and joins up — not out of patriotic zeal but because his life is stagnating. He has found sex but is unhappy about its casual nature. He badly wants a love affair and the experience on which to base his poetry. In the army he will meet men and get a chance at some of the action. The poems during his 15 months military training show him having several short love affairs — an old-fashioned search for a Knight in Shining Armour.

But one man, unnamed in the poems, is particularly important. I think this is his cousin Leslie Gunston. There is no evidence that Gunston himself is gay but, with his new found confidence, Wilfred tries to move an already close friendship onto a new footing and is rebuffed. But apart from a slight cooling off in early 1918, a result of Wilfred's rapidly expanding horizons and tensions resulting from their different attitudes to the war, they stay very close. He shares his amusement with Leslie when a group of fellow officers are upset by Wilfred's success with some French girls: 'The dramatic irony was too killing, considering certain other things, not possible to tell in a letter.' He sends Leslie his roundel on the statue of Hercules in the Quarry at Shrewsbury — obviously expecting him to enjoy this very gay joke. In a moving letter in 1917 (censored by his editors) he records giving Leslie the key to his poems. It is sad that Leslie failed Wilfred by not telling his side of the story.

In early 1917 four months of horror in the Somme trenches end in shellshock and Craiglockart hospital. Here he is under the care of Dr Brock who tells him to get in touch with Edinburgh's 'submerged tenth'. Evidently the doctor believes good sex to be an excellent cure for a shellshocked gay. I don't know if Brock was also gay. If so, his importance to Wilfred cannot be overestimated.

Good luck now gives him Siegfried Sassoon and of course he falls head-over-heels in love. Siegfried is under intense pressure because of his protest against the war, and a much loved friend has just been killed in the trenches, so Wilfred does not get a lover. Instead he gets a close gay friend who understands and accepts his poetry. His few published letters to Siegfried are full of sexy asides and comments. Recounting his last day in England he reports: 'Moreover there issued from the sea distraction, in the shape, Shape I say, but lay no

**The Nation* merged with the *New Statesman* in 1931.

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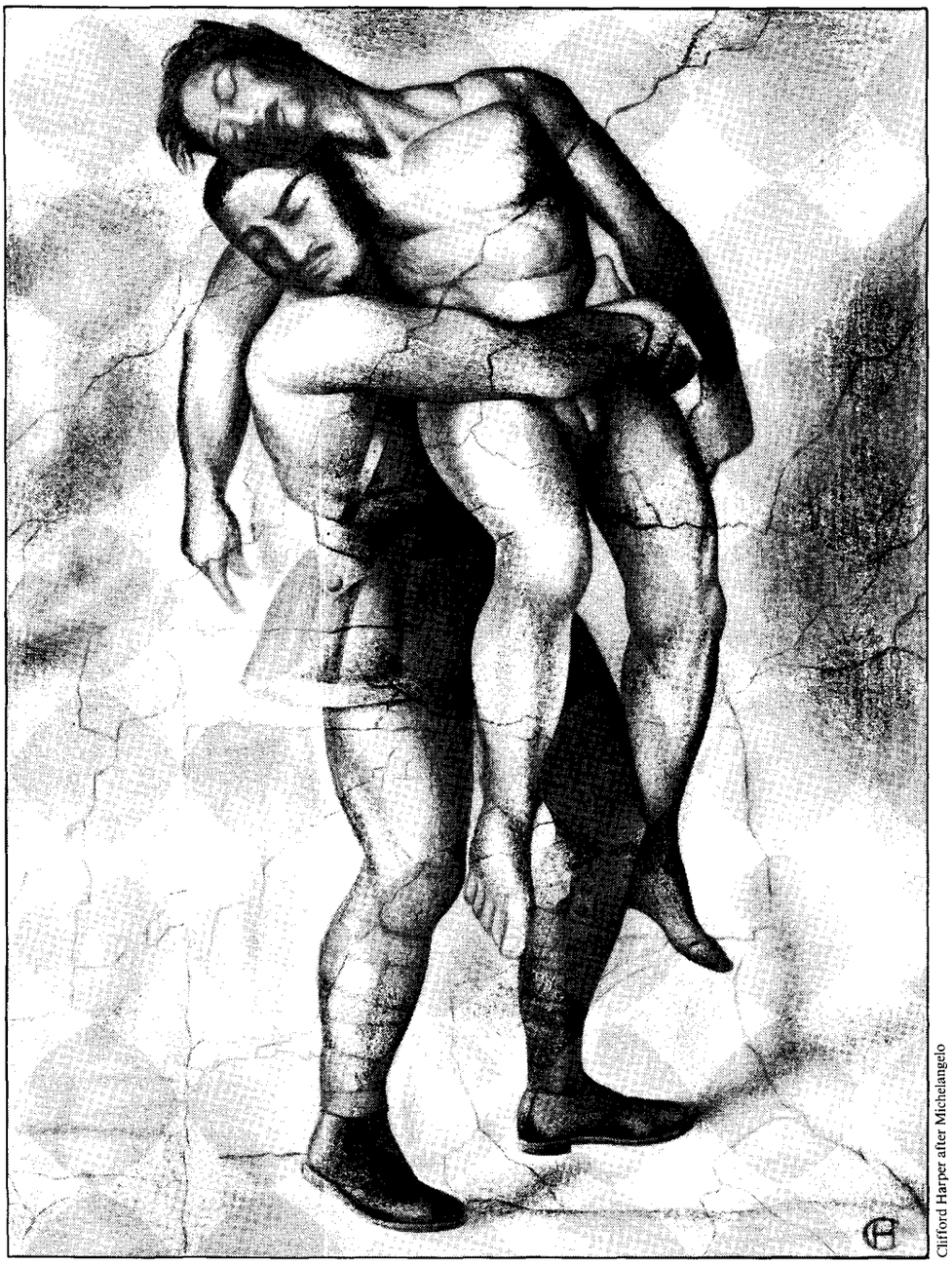

Clifford Harper after Michelangelo

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stress on that, of a Harrow boy, of superb intellect & refinement; intellect because he hates the war more than Germans; refinement because of the way he spoke of my Going, and of the Sun, and of the Sea there; and the way he spoke of Everything. In fact the way he spoke . . .'

This gets cleaned up for his mother: 'My last hours in England were brightened by a bathe in the fair green Channel, in company of the best piece of Nation left in England — a Harrow boy, of superb intellect & refinement, intellect because he detests war more than Germans, and refinement because of the way he spoke of my going away; and the way he spoke of the Sun; and of the Air; and everything. In fact the way he spoke.'

Stallworthy quoted the letter to Sassoon leaving out the sexy first sentence. But he missed the significance of the capital G in Going. There must have been a handy beach hut.

Siegfried's great gift to Wilfred is access to other gay writers, first Robert Graves, then Robbie Ross, who was Oscar Wilde's friend, and, through Robbie, Osbert Sitwell and More Adey. At Graves' wedding he meets Charles Scott-Moncrieff, who puts him in touch with his lover Philip Bainbrigge, attached to the Welsh Regiment at Scarborough where Wilfred is also based. The gay community is working fast and well.

Uncertainty and longing have now gone from Wilfred's love poems. The lovely 'Shadwell Stair' is about cruising the docks and ending up in bed with another man: 'But when the crowing sirens blare,/I with another ghost am lain.'; 'True resumption of experienced things' indeed! Another reports, 'One bound my thighs with his muscled arm,/Whose weight was good to bear./O may he come to no worse harm/Than what he wrought me there.' Wilfred has some fond memories by now. Stallworthy described 'Who is the god of Canongate?' as 'curious and disturbing', evidently deeply disturbed that Our Hero has discovered city boys out for sex, fun and a little money.

By now Wilfred is openly gay with those close to him. But he fails with his brother Harold, whose account of their last meeting deserves to be in an anthology of gay coming-out stories. Wilfred gently brings the conversation round to The Topic. Harold responds by talking about homosexuality in the Navy and betrays his extreme repugnance. Wilfred extricates himself with some fast footwork. The picture of the two brothers desperate to be close and totally unable to bridge the gap is sad and moving. (In his biography Stallworthy merely recorded the brothers as talking about women.) Later Harold tried to suppress evidence of Wilfred's gayness, but was too insensitive to know what to destroy.

THE DIRECTNESS of Wilfred's sexual references and his determination to tell the world frightens his new upper-class friends. His gay attitudes are self-taught and streetwise. He is pressured to tone down the poems by Osbert Sitwell: 'Always hoping . . . to copy out and generally denebulize a few poems acceptable to you.' Siegfried's emendations often reduce the erotic stress and Wilfred probably censors himself. A poetic price is paid. For a poem to be universal it must deal with the particular and challenge the reader to relate to it on its own terms. Despite the constraints Wilfred passes this test extraordinarily well, far better than gay poets such as W. H. Auden.

The key to Wilfred's later poetry is his S&M sexuality. The images he uses — 'stroke on stroke of pain', 'Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps', 'An you be my quire tonight/And you my wine' — suggest he enjoys caning, bondage and, possibly, water sports. He would have few problems finding lovers to play with. A friend who, like me, enjoys these games, and who was on the scene in the 1920s, says things have changed little since Owen's day. Wilfred shares his interest with Siegfried and uses the images in joky asides: 'but hope you will have lashed yourself, (lashed *yourself*!) into something'; 'I desire no more *exposed flanks* of any sort for a long time'.

But he is also turned on by death. The soldier who has fought on the Somme, become a pacifist and, without guilt, apology or explanation, can still say that, above all conventional ideals and pleasures, sweeter 'to me was that smile,/Faint as a wan, worn myth, Faint and exceeding small,/On a boy's murdered mouth' does not fit any

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conventional mould. S&Mers face a challenge when we relate the games of power, pain and pleasure, which we play with consenting friends, to the reality of the rest of our lives. In the trenches Wilfred has to endure the full horror that results when power goes mad and the individual loses the right to withold consent. And he is turned on by the experience. Wilfred comes through to accept himself and regains enough control to write the most powerful love poetry ever to come out of war.

Wilfred's love for the soldiers with whom he shares the trenches always has the potential to become explicitly sexual and sexual love haunts these war poems. All comes together in 'Strange Meeting', rough and unfinished as he leaves it:

> Whatever hope is yours,
> Was my life also; I went hunting wild
> After the wildest beauty in the world,
> Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
> But mocks the steady running of the hour,
> And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
> For by my glee might many men have laughed,
> And of my weeping something had been left,
> Which must die now. I mean the truth untold.

Remove the words 'gun' and perhaps 'war' from 'Strange Meeting' and the poem becomes a powerful gay protest. But Wilfred leaps beyond labels: the poem is at once the testament of a gay man, a soldier and a poet. For a gay man, aware of centuries of oppression and knowing that, once this war is over, his own battle is only just begun, it is strikingly optimistic.

Some critics have seen guilt in Wilfred's later poems. I see only the conflict of impossible demands: to return to France and be with the men he loves and who need good leadership; to gain the power to be heard by killing other soldiers, while passionately believing it is wrong to kill; to return to a sexual scene to which he would not freely consent. On August 1918 he goes back to France and, leading an attack, one week before the armistice, Wilfred is killed.

This Wilfred Owen is 1,000 miles from the person manufactured by the Owen Industry. Why have they got him so wrong? It is a failure of the heterosexual imagination. The first duty of scholars is to understand the community in which their subject lives, its concerns, ideals and ways of expression (the second is to get it right). Until Stallworthy, Hibberd & Co. achieve this they will remain narrow and sectarian writers.

Unlike them Wilfred takes his sexuality into his life and to his death in the trenches. In a letter to Siegfried he describes the action in which he wins the MC: 'But one day I will write Deceased over many books. I'm glad I've been recommended for M.C., & hope to get it, for the confidence it may give me at home. Full of confidence after having taken a few machine guns (with the help of one seraphic lance corporal,) I held a most glorious brief peace talk in a pill box. You would have been "en pamoisons" [in a swoon].' Probably they just kissed. But I prefer to see them among the mud, barbed wire and corpses, sucking each other off. It is a vital judgment on a world that offers men only the chance to kill each other. □

Jonathan Cutbill is Edward Carpenter's literary executor and was one of the defendants in the battle between Gay's The Word and Customs and Excise.

ARTS

David Trevena, Maureen Douglass and John Hurt exchange a few self-conscious meanings in *Rocinante*

CINEMA

Signs and meanings

Judith Williamson

Rocinante (PG)
Renoir

WHEN I WAS at film school in the Seventies, narrative forms were regarded as reactionary. Those using film for directly political purposes worked mostly in documentary — Cinema Action were a key group in this genre — while those who thought any form of 'realism' was bourgeois eschewed the representational qualities of film altogether.

This meant that no one either learnt, or learnt to value, the skills of directing actors, writing dialogue, sustaining action, or in any way using film as an exciting or pleasurable fiction medium. Films by theorists Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen exemplified this non-art of film making: worked out on paper beforehand, their attempts to say radical things through schematically constructed narratives proved wooden and unfilmic — that is, with the ideas easily separable from the image.

I introduce *Rocinante* in this context because as Cinema Action's first fiction feature (and their accession to Art Cinema) its problems are relevant to a much wider movement within independent filmmaking, a turn from documentary to fiction that in many ways parallels the left's more general abandonment of its old clothes for what it thinks to be smarter or more popular.

Rocinante — one of those names you always feel you are pronouncing wrong, which is *not* very popular — is the name of Don Quixote's horse. The film is described in the production notes as 'a journey through the English countryside and a re-examination of Britain's cultural and social history'. What happens *in* it is that Bill (John Hurt) who lives in a derelict cinema projecting images of the English landscape, crosses paths with Jess, who, we finally discover, is involved in a plot to disrupt the Coal Board computer. Together they travel through the English countryside — beautifully photographed by Thaddeus O'Sullivan — on their different missions. A 'Jester' (Ian Dury) provides intermittent comment and quotes from English history and poetry.

The narrative is obviously meant to be quite engrossing because there are regular 'clues' to Jess's plan of action, people appear and reappear, and oblique references made early in the film are explained later on. But the real 'clues' are, in-fact, not clues to the plot but to the film's intellectual structure; which instead of being organic within the film has to be perpetually found in translation between film and ideas. In this sense it isn't really a fiction and the characters aren't really characters — they are representatives of particular positions and values. Jess doesn't actually do much in the film but clearly stands for political activity. Bill, equally clearly, stands for Romantic idealism. Thus every encounter becomes an ideological essay, until even dialogue like 'what's your name?' comes to sound painfully meaningful, while phrases like 'was it a crime, or was it just In the Nature of Things', said with heavy innuendo, speak to an audience already smugly versed in the ideological import of 'the nature of things'.

The self-consciousness of its 'meanings' is one of the film's biggest failings. The script itself is always ready to provide metaphors — with characters saying things like 'I suppose we all light

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matches in the dark' and 'Do stowaways know where they're going?'. Or they translate each other, as when the old projectionist helpfully outlines the conceptual significance of Bill's speech about land: 'Oh, you mean like in *Red River*, all people remember is the prairie.' This over-labouring of the dialogue is characteristic of many films of this kind — another recent example being *The Passion of Remembrance*.

These two films are hailed together in the BFI's prestigious *Monthly Film Bulletin* as 'an exciting new wave of British independent filmmaking' — and have been lauded in the usual fashion outlets, the *Face*, *NME*, etc. But watching *Rocinante* (twice) made me think, in retrospect, that it was doing the less experienced makers of *The Passion of Remembrance* a disservice in the long run not to point out more harshly the dangers of being boring and pretentious. In last month's review I allowed my sympathy for their *project* to soften my criticisms of their *film*. But a film really has to work as a film — not as a text to be translated into political concepts. This is a common problem with political filmmakers turning to fiction: there is no investment in the story, only in what it stands for.

If you really want to say something it is still usually better to make a documentary and *say* it than to put it into the mouths of puppet 'fictional' characters.

For somewhere in this new drive to 'fiction' there is a fundamental mistake. The analysis and deconstruction of classical Hollywood films in the Seventies revealed narratives as the vehicles for powerful ideological messages — this was what the film criticism of *Screen* was all about. But these messages weren't thought out on purpose and then craftily wound into the plot: no one sat down and said, 'let's make a film about bourgeois values', they said 'let's make a film about a wartime romance' or whatever. The fact that we can 'decode' the film later to discuss its values doesn't necessarily mean the process can be reversed. You can draw ideologies out of a fiction, but you can't nearly as easily put them in.

What we now analyse in Hollywood films is usually 'put in' them unconsciously; and something on this level exists in all creations. What is striking about the weightily self-conscious contemporary fictions is their attempt to control all the meaning — as if nothing would come over without massive plugging.

But if there is something to be drawn out of *Rocinante* that its makers are surely not aware of, it is a terrible humourlessness. Lack of humour has always been a problem for the left, and one quality the right-on documentaries of the Seventies share with the Art fictions of the Eighties is precisely a lack of self-irony, a level of humour that prevents affectation.

It is not easy for me to say these things about films produced by groups I know and support, in a context of independent filmmaking to which I am firmly committed. But from that very commitment arises the need for debate and real criticism, and at a certain point someone has to say — look, this really doesn't work. *Rocinante* is full of good ideas and stunning images: but then, so is a good art history lecture. What makes a fiction film work is something else, and we have to learn what it is and how to do it. □

MUSIC

White noise, black noise

Simon Reynolds

IF THERE WAS JUSTICE in this pop world, **Husker Dü** would already be MASSIVE. In one sense, at least, they *are* — they are recreating the sense of vastness, of untouchable distance, that rock hasn't possessed since the early Seventies. (Only U2 come close to matching them.) Husker Dü are gloriously at odds with their time and, thus, truly hip. Imagine a charred, foaming union of Hendrix and The Byrds, 'I Don't Live Today' meets 'Eight Miles High'. The dynamic of their music is the lived contradiction between American 'recurring dreams' of space and freedom and purpose, and a reality of claustrophobia and entropy. The response to this deadlock is noise that aspires to the heavens. Husker Dü's achievement is a musical violence free of machismo, a rock power whose heart is wounded fragility, love driven mad. *Warehouse: Songs and Stories* (Warners) is their sixth LP and second double album. It's their most commercial, classically-structured yet, but I can't see them making it, not unless there's a dramatic shift in pop consciousness. But who knows — maybe wigging out will be this year's Next Big Thing.

Husker Dü are Noise Romantics. **Big Black** are Noise Terrorists, rubbing our noses in a different 'reality' of small-town America — not its blankness, but the underside of monstrous horror it can drive people to. 'Jordan, Minnesota' is the *true* story of a town organised around an economy of child-swapping, of systematic abuse, 'Kerosene' is about a man driven to self-immolation by sheer boredom. The album which includes these tracks, *Atomiser* (Blast First) is a brilliantly articulate assault — lyrically and musically, there's a kind of *lucidity* to the viciousness.

Microdisney are brainy Irishmen who think it's futile trying to be 'disturbing' unless you reach beyond the rock intelligentsia (who are ultimately so flexible of mind they are beyond being subverted). On *Crooked Mile* (Virgin) they combine soft-rock ingratiation (Eagles/McCartney/Andrew Gold) with unsettling lyrics, in an effort to insinuate corrosive IDEAS into the ken of ordinary, MOR-loving folk. This strategy fails doubly. MOR requires that *words* be anodyne too, reaffirm common-sense, stable notions of reality. Microdisney are too wordy, still too tied to the rock literati (even quoting from a Suicide song, indeed)! At the same time, their implacably perky, sunny tunes subvert their own attempts to provoke.

US band **The Cramps** have singlehandedly inspired a genre called *psychobilly* — a mixture of rockabilly primitivism and ghoulish preoccupations whose goal is to get 'real gone'. This British cult is, in many ways, a kind of heavy metal: jerky pelvic rhythms fit perfectly with a crude, stunted vision of sex ('What's Inside A Girl?', 'Can Your Pussy Do The Dog?'). Only The Cramps are wild enough to redeem this *muck*. But wilder by far are the originals of the songs The Cramps cover, which have been gathered onto a splendid compilation — *Born Bad* (Born Bad Records). Fabulously obscure rockabilly/Sixties punk tracks like The Groupies' 'Primitive' and The Third Bardo's 'I'm Five Years Ahead of My Time' display a mania that The Cramps, trapped by their own retro camp, have never quite recreated.

Talking of monomania, **T. La Rock** has a new single. Produced and co-written by Mantronik (the genius behind Mantronix and the best producer on the planet) 'Back To Burn' (10) is literally stunning. Imagine Art of Noise stripped of whimsy and frills, and remotivated with the aggressive self-regard of 'Anarchy In The UK' or 'Search And Destroy'. Slashes of sound harass the listener's flesh like avenging mosquitoes, each beat is a mini-apocalypse; this is meaningless assertion, a pure rush of energy.

Tashan represents a new direction for hardcore hip hop label Def Jam — a return to the silky Seventies soul and romantic tenderness of The Stylistics, Delfonics, Marvin Gaye. But this sweetness is set in thrilling opposition to hip hop inflected rhythms. *Chasin' A Dream* is a brilliant debut. The killer is the title track — over a stalking beat, powered by the most rockist riffs since prime Isleys, Tashan swoons out a tale of urban woe: 'got no direction/I got no idea/How I'm gon' make it/Got me/Cold chasin' a dream.'

The latest hip hop trend is to take segments of organic, groovy black dance (James Brown, War, Go-Go . . .) and slice them together in a jarring, inorganic way (the opposite of *fusion*). Some hot examples — **Salt-N-Pepa**'s 'Beauty And The Beat', (Next Plateau) **Frick and Frapp's** 'You Shouldn't Have Done It' (Romil), **D. J. Scott La Rock's** 'South Bronx' off the superb *Crucial 3* (Streetsounds), **Heavy D and The Boyz'** *'Mr Big Stuff'* (MCA). This last is funny because it cuts up Jean Knight's Stax hit, a putdown of a bigshot, so that the track contains its own feminist critique of the rapper's focal machismo: 'who do you think you are!'

Salt-N-Pepa and Frick And Frack are both female rapping duos, tuff women, but they can hardly be recuperated by left-liberal approval. For instance, Frick and Frapp's 'Jealous Girls' sees them disrespectin' their own sex: 'Tramp! You ain't *nobody*, babee! Tryin' to be high class on a low income! Jealous girls!' Little evidence of feminist sorority on these otherwise fantastic records.

Rick Rubin argues that hip hop is *black rock*, its heavy beat totally different from disco's pulse beat, its attitude 'street', renegade, vandalistic, not upwardly aspiring. So how long before we get hip hop stars dabbling in the Occult, selling their souls to the Devil like Robert Johnson, Ozzy Osbourne? Hip hop is already using metal riffs — how long before wigging out, long tongues, make-up, flamethrower/chainsaw codpieces? Black and white male teenage vileness united against the Moral Majority? A fascinating prospect! □

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ART

End of a reign

John Spurling

Director's Choice
National Gallery

COMPARED TO THE TATE'S many thorny problems — its disparate collections, its chronic shortage of exhibition space, its lack of funds, its long record of bad judgment in purchasing — the National Gallery's can be reduced to two. The first is that it's liable to be taken for granted as something always there and more or less the same; the second that old masterpieces are now hard and very expensive to come by.

If neither of these has seemed much of a problem for the past 13 years, this is because the Gallery has had an outstanding Director in Sir Michael Levey, who retires this month. Of course there have been hiccups in his regime. The aborted competition for an extension to the Gallery was one. Another was the kerfuffle over his successor, when an American museum director selected by the Trustees turned the offer down.

But since Levey became Director in 1973 the Gallery has been much more notable for its positive efforts to avoid being taken for granted than for its inadvertent publicity. The founding of an Education Department, travelling exhibitions, the scheme by which a young contemporary artist is given a studio and an exhibition in the Gallery each year; the idea of mounting series of small exhibitions — 'Painting in Focus', 'Acquisition in Focus', 'Second Sight' — to draw attention to particular works in the collection: all these date from Levey's period as Director. The choice of artists in residence has been dull, but the series of small exhibitions called 'Artist's Eye', in which established contemporary artists have made their own choice from the gallery's masterpieces, has been conspicuously successful. 'Director's Choice', containing 38 — a little more than half — of Levey's favourite purchases from his period as Director, really belongs to this series and demonstrates succinctly why the Gallery's second problem has been in abeyance.

Levey is an impressively all-round art historian, whose list of books, pamphlets and essays at the end of the catalogue stretches from Dürer to Lord Leighton and from Ottoman Art to Ruysdael and Murillo. But he is perhaps best known as a Renaissance historian with a particular interest in the 17th- and 18th-century heirs to the Renaissance, who have been mostly out of favour until quite recently. His long-prepared and very substantial book on Tiepolo (Yale, £45) — the first full-length book on the artist in English — has been published to coincide with his retirement and reveals both his preference for the controlled beauty of art over its agony and ecstasy and his persuasive enthusiasm. In a book as well illustrated as this, the author might be forgiven for ducking out of detailed verbal descriptions, but Levey cannot help himself. He doesn't neglect the art history or biography, but his enjoyment of the paintings comes first and must be conveyed to the reader. Reduced to brief comments, as he is in the catalogue to 'Director's Choice', he can sometimes sound a little like a proprietor rubbing his hands beside your table in a restaurant: 'We deliberately took some years considering before finally selecting our Meléndez . . .' But, after all, that has been a large part of his job, to serve the nation with the best possible new dishes in paint, and no one seeing these acquisitions — their range and quality — could complain of not being given a treat.

If the 17th and 18th centuries loom largest here, that may be partly a reflection of Levey's own taste, but it is also a response to gaps in the collection. The trio of 18th-century French portraits by Perroneau, Drouais ('Mme de Pompadour'), and David strengthen a particularly weak area, but there are also first-rate portraits by Murillo, Rembrandt ('Hendrickje Stoffels'), Parmigianino, Stubbs, Degas and even Matisse, for Levey is the first National Gallery Director to set foot in the 20th century as he is the first to buy a Stubbs.

The grandest acquisition is Rubens' 'Samson and Delilah' and the most magical Claude's 'The Enchanted Castle', some of whose details were borrowed by Keats for the 'Ode to a Nightingale'. It would be almost as hard now to imagine the National Gallery without these two paintings as without Seurat's 'Bathers at Asnières' or Piero's 'Baptism of Christ'. But there are also many smaller, more private works, such as Pontormo's 'Joseph' panels (originally painted for a wedding bedroom in Florence) with their glowing, fruit-like colours, Pissarro's sunlit 'Sydenham', Monet's blue, smoky 'Gare St Lazare' and indeed the long-sought Meléndez 'Still-Life', which every one of us new owners should make a point of seeing.

Matisse's 'Portrait of Greta Moll' (detail): one of the director's choices

The new Director, Neil MacGregor, art historian and editor of *The Burlington Magazine*, has said that 'Sir Michael Levey must be the hardest act to follow' and talked of keeping the impetus going in such matters as education, free admission, conservation, presentation, refurbishment of galleries, etc. Good luck to him. But I hope he will also be clever and fortunate enough to buy some paintings as good as these; otherwise he will not begin to follow the act, which was that of a great enjoyer of art first and only second that of an efficient and imaginative civil servant. □

TELEVISION

Alas

Hugo Williams

GOD KNOWS IT'S HARD to tell the difference between one television programme and the next: you turn on the tap and you take a bath in the stuff and afterwards you feel dirty, tired and ashamed. Basically, you're either sitting in your armchair, eating something and reading a book, or someone else is sitting in it and you have to sit in the other one and offer them a drink. All the more interesting, then, when someone comes out of the closet and acknowledges the simple truth: that it's all the same in the long run, so why bother?

Not that my 'laugh' is anything to judge from, these days, but I do remember something of the kind coming out of me watching *Alas, Smith and Jones*. Most of their stuff was fairly honestly Sixties-derived; their stupidity-and-ignorance skits either filtered John Cleese or, as when they put on working-class accents and sat facing one another, Dud 'n' Pete carbons. Other ideas, such as their lexicographer's 'a gin and tonic of stick insects', 'an international flight-path of conference delegates', reminded us of Ronnie Barker's word-play. But I liked their road accident research film — 'Christ, he's still alive, can we try that one again?' — and their doctor-breaking-the-bad-news sketch. The X-rays have come through. Are they bad? 'NO, no, not at all. *Excellent* quality pictures.' Shadows? 'What a great old band!' I want *the truth*. 'Well, the news is bad. I blame Alasdair Burnett.' But doctor, I was going to get in the taxi and go to my new house in Hemel Hempstead . . . 'Forget the house. Forget the taxi. I'll give you some morphine for when the pain becomes unbearable.'

I also liked their World Organisation for Middle Income Groups, 'a charity for those who have a reasonable amount of money, but tantalisingly not quite enough', which considered one man's plans to transform his outhouse into a jacussi 'so imaginative that we decided to chip in'. Likewise, their day centre for ugly children — parent of ugly child: 'We really don't know what we would do without the centre' — raised a kind of smirk. I suppose overexcitement at understanding a football joke may account for my having taken down '£40,000 for two Watford supporters seems very reasonable under the circumstances', but it is possible that I was just in a good mood from the overall high standard of the shows: the after-dinner speaker terrified of getting to his feet

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because he has an erection being advised to think of Enoch Powell, for instance.

All that sort of thing peaked long ago: brain cells have now crumbled with the onslaught of success-calories and what we rushed back to see last Sunday was **The World According to Smith and Jones** (admittedly on ITV now), a little TV-snack cooked up for us by writer Colin Bostock-Smith, if such a person is to be believed in. To my mind, the duo should have stuck with the services of the earlier 'Mohammed-Bostock-Mohammed': at least his name was funnier.

Having been put in a thoroughly nauseated mood by Glenda Jackson and George Segal coming on in their *Touch of Class* roles to PR for the billion-dollar Anglo-American 'Hanson Corporation', and been reminded by John Hurt (AIDS ad.) that we're never again going to be able to have casual sex with anyone, I was hardly in the right frame of mind to look kindly on another old-Hollywood-clips-with-unfunny-remarks-on-top show, which is what this new thing is, cover of *TV Times* and all.

It's a 'History of the World' collage, starting with Adam and Eve. 'Their hair was beautifully styled, but before long these paragons of domestic grace degenerated into this': clips from old cave-man cheapies with cracks like 'Two Sloanes fighting over a cigarette lighter' or 'The first recorded instance of Millwall losing at Home'. Bald Pharoahs suffer predictably from 'plagues of premature hair-loss' or 'enter into meaningful discussion' with pyramid architects (flogging scene). It's exactly the level of stuff you knock back and forth with the unexpected visitor you can't be bothered to switch off the late film for. And, as if all that weren't enough to put you in a bait, on come Simon Callow and Leo McKern at half-time to do some knowing little playlet in favour of Lloyds Bank.

Oh, just in case you haven't got the hang of how to do these jokes yet, 'early man spoke English with completely different lip movements' (dubbed clip). Still too thick? Er . . . 'These were non-synchronised English-speaking people' you see. 'And speaking of sex, we now come to the climax of our show . . .' Click.

The preview of the week was undoubtedly that for **Blunt** (BBC2). You paid for your drink before the showing, but got a free one afterwards, if you'd stayed. When the credits rolled, nobody said a word or moved in case they were sitting next to someone who was in it or otherwise implicated. Then everyone clapped with enthusiastic hypocrisy. The film was strangely wooden, except for the scenes beside a river with Michael Williams as Goronwy Rees, the one talented member of the crackpot coterie, who got out when the others should have and had to keep their secret for 20 years. As a purely physical indictment of the creepy Master of the Queen's Pictures, Ian Richardson's Blunt ensured a unanimous verdict of guilty.

The other thing I watched was **Beauty** (C4): 'stay tuned to separate the symmetry from the sex'; 'viewers are advised that there are certain scenes they may find offensive'. I did, but there weren't. Dr Ruth Seifert got it about right: 'There is an oppressive quality in having to look nice when you go out, but it is part of what happens in the animal kingdom and to make ourselves that different would be a grave mistake.' □

WORK IN PROGRESS

Women and song

Naseem Khan

GOD KNOWS why it's called The Fridge. It's not small and it's not white. On the contrary, it's vast and black with dim lighting and the air of a place where the unexpected can happen. Which it does, every first Thursday of the month, when the place turns into a women's nightclub called Eve's Revenge.

When it first began, nine months or so ago, the club concentrated on providing a platform for live music: bands like We've Got a Fuzzbox, Mint Juleps and (the time that I was there) Gale Thompson with her Gale Force. Women only for women only. And very pleasant it was, with that particular lower-key, less strident level of enjoyment that seems to characterise women-only events.

If the club fills a gap from the audience's point of view (however much, in so doing, it validates the principle of the all-male club), it does so from the performers' point of view too. There's a general lack, says Jenny Landreth, one of the club's founders, of music venues in London. And women's music groups, unless they are packaged and marketted in the way that male managements recognise, fare worst of all. Eve's Revenge — large, well-equipped, easy to get to — is, at its most basic, a healthy addition to the music scene.

The Fridge was in my mind on a number of occasions after my visit there — especially in Walthamstow's The Chestnut Tree and the Duke of Wellington on the fringes of Hackney. Friendly places, both of them, but not exactly glittering: small, cramped and well off the beaten track. Nor was there any question that each of the women singer-songwriters that I went to hear — Judy Small and Maria Tolly — could have handled a larger venue.

Judy Small had packed to capacity the Chestnut Tree's functional upper room, with latecomers lining the walls. This was surprising, in a sense, since Small is an Australian on a rare British tour and has, moreover, a low public profile (although it did seem, for a few minutes, as if she might have achieved unwitting notoriety: MP Anthony Beaumont Dark had responded with horror to one of her lyrics, in which she referred to Princess Di as 'a baby machine').

You might expect, from that scrap of lyric, someone at the cruder end of feminism. But, though Judy Small is unquestionably a radical, campaigning singer, with roots in both folk and country and western, she is neither crude nor polemical. She has instead a remarkable warmth and generosity of sympathies, a keen sense of history and a strong, true and versatile voice. The concerns are, partly, predictable (which is not to denigrate them): the women's peace movement ('The Futures Exchange' and 'Bridget Evans') in both Australia, where a US base sits on aboriginal tribal land, and at Greenham; militarism ('Our Best Friend'). But public songs like these, however much written and performed with subtlety and feeling, were the lesser part of her performance that night at The Chestnuts, as they are on her albums available here*.

The greater part of them are stimulated by smaller perceptions. Her subjects, in the folk singing vein, are the ordinary rather than the grand: the unrecorded, quiet strength of generations of Australian women, for instance. 'Mothers, Daughters, Wives' considers, with a haunting simplicity, the fate of the women who saw first their husbands and then, later, their sons go off to wars. 'From the Lambing to the Wool', a ballad about life on a sheep station, attempts, says Small, to redress the imbalance in Australian folk music, whereby most of the traditional songs are about the lives of men in the bush — shearers, drovers, bushrangers, swaggies.

It is easy to make her sound pious and humourless, which she's not. In the packed and appreciative Chestnuts Folk Club, she had a nice, dry edge to her presentation. And, although threatened by the same danger as anyone connected with country and western (the danger of seeming sentimental in large doses) this is counteracted by a wry modesty — in her songs about being a maiden aunt, for instance, or the delightful 'If I Ever Sing a Love Song'.

Maria Tolly, performing at the tiny Duke of Wellington, is no more a cynic that Judy Small. A small, battling woman who has survived a turbulent marriage (that eventually broke up over politics), four children and the struggle to establish herself as a singer, she is the sort of person — redoubtable and fierce — who should rightly be the subject of a Judy Small song. But both musically and in approach she is very different. The songs are strong, campaigning ones, designed more for platforms than for pubs, with guitar accompaniments that owe much to her earlier training in flamenco. They are songs that lend their powerful voice to particular causes — to the miners' strike, Nicaragua, anti-sexism ('It'll all be on *their* terms/When it ought to be on *our* terms') and Northern Ireland.

The anger is more open in Tolly's work, the sarcasm is more biting, for this is essentially billboard art. Tragedy, when Small documents it, is by contrast smaller: a young man, for instance, killed in front of her ('He had a wife and a couple of kids/And he made page 45') — the accidental death of a nobody. Different as they are, the two women share a common compassion that is sometimes moving and always impressive. □

Judy Small's One Voice in the Crowd *and* Mothers, Daughters, Wives *and Maria Tolly's* Gonna Get Up *and* Voices *are available from WRPM, 62 Woodstock Rd, Birmingham B13 9BN; 021-449 7041.*

Next week: Does the Labour Party have an arts policy?

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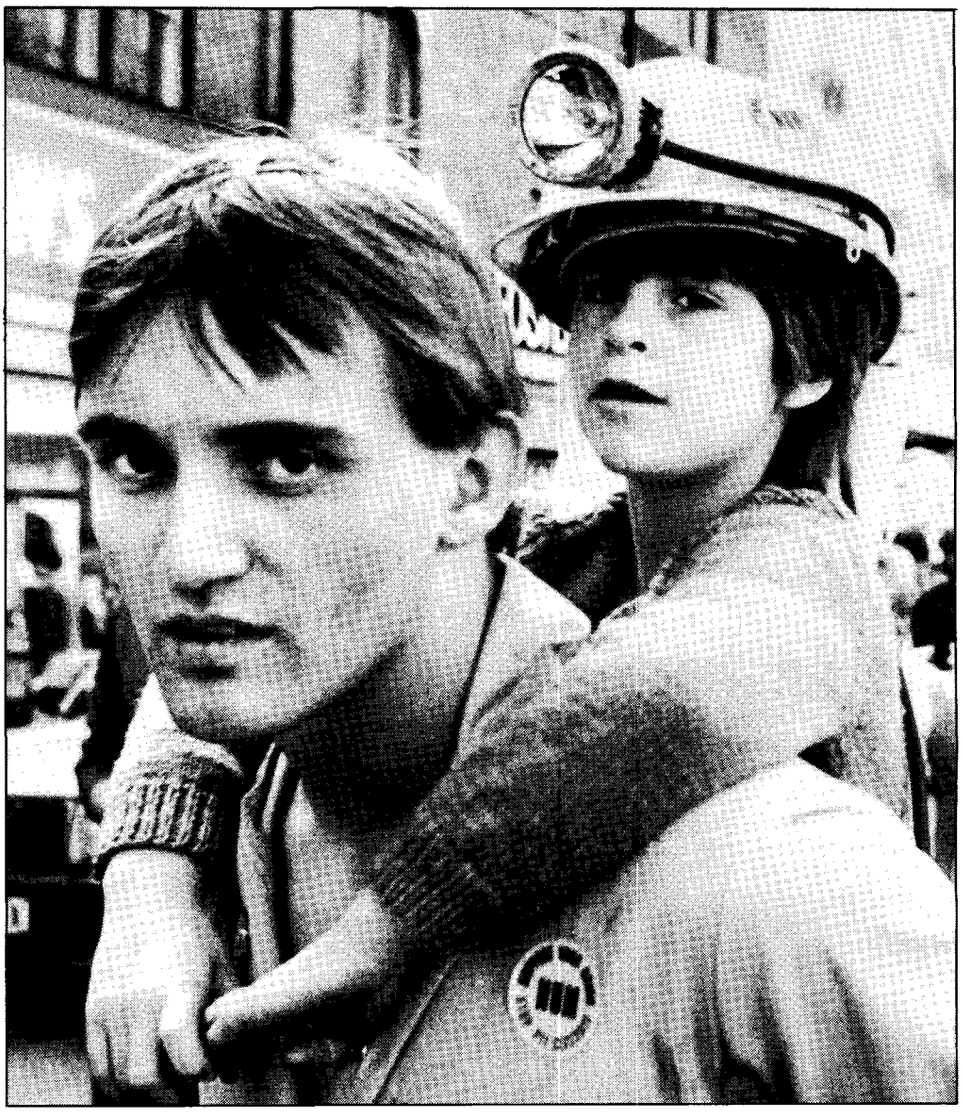
Books

HISTORY

Strike while the iron's hot

David Edgar

Red Hill: A Mining Community
TONY PARKER *Heinemann* £9.95
Thurcroft: A Village and the Miners' Strike
PEOPLE OF THURCROFT *Spokesman* £20 & £5.95
The Enemy Within: Pit Villages and the Miners' Strike of 1984-5
ed. RAPHAEL SAMUEL, BARBARA BLOOMFIELD and GUY BOANAS *Routledge* £6.95



Debt to the past; obligation to the future

THERE ARE REMARKABLY few books about the momentous industrial struggles of the past 20 years. The dramatic conflicts of the Heath premiership have been particularly effectively hidden from history. True, there was one (not terribly memorable) account of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' Work-in, and Penguin published the miners' evidence to the 1972 Wilberforce Inquiry in *A Special Case*, but, in book form at least, there was nothing on the 1972 strike as a whole (not even on Saltley); nothing on the 1974 re-run; nothing even on the docks' dispute which culminated in the imprisonment and release of the Pentonville Five.

To remark that the 1984-5 miners' strike has been different is something of an understatement. Clearly, if you want your strike to earn Public Lending Right, keep it going for a year. The first wave of strike books emerged in the summer and autumn of 1985 and ranged from the thoughtful and discursive (Huw Beynon's essay compilation *Digging Deeper*) via the punchily polemical (Geoffrey Goodman's pro-miner but anti-Scargill *Miners' Strike*) to the *Sunday Times*' Insight Team's crudely propagandist, pro-Government *Strike*. Now we are reaching the end of the second, largely hardback phase of the publishing offensive, which has included another overall history (Martin Adeney and John Lloyd's *The Miners' Strike: Loss without Limit*) and Sir Ian McGregor's grisly apologia *The Enemies Within*.

The three books considered here also owe their existence to the cassette recorder and, like Sir Ian's ghost, Rodney Tyler, their editors are suitably diffident about their role (in the case of Thurcroft's amanuenses, Peter Gibbon and David Steyne, almost ludicrously so). But in fact all three demonstrate clearly that orature is as refractable as literature; that the most popular of histories can preserve a distinctive authorial vox.

In the case of Tony Parker's pseudonymous, Northumbrian **Red Hill**, the tone is one of almost unbearable bleakness: despite a couple of statutory women-who-were-utterly-changed-by-it-all, the overriding (indeed overwhelming) impression is of a community visited and subsequently vitiated by the inscrutable workings of an alien destiny — a confrontation which has left many if not most mystified, dazed and numb.

The fact that Gibbon and Steyne's actual **Thurcroft** (lodge banner inscription: 'From Obscurity to Respect') feels so dramatically different is partly that South Yorkshire is a different kind of place and played a very different role in the strike. But it's also a function of the perspective the compilers have chosen: despite their insistence that the 'selection of material or comments is not based on giving prominence to the beliefs we find most sympathetic ourselves', they acknowledge that their sources are almost entirely drawn from 'rank-and-file activists'. And, as nearly half of Thurcroft's miners returned before the end of the strike, the decision not to interview scabs makes the book inevitably partial; though its chronological form and wealth of detail make it also an illuminating and often exciting read (even if individuals — characterised by letters rather than invented names — are hard to follow through).

Like McGregor, the chroniclers of Ruskin College were attracted to Margaret Thatcher's most notorious statement for their title. **The Enemy Within** does report on both sides, particularly in an acute and painful set of interviews from Nottinghamshire. But, apart from Barbara Bloomfield's brave and illuminating essay on the Maerdy Women's Support Group, the body of the book is too much of a bricolage to match the impact of *Thurcroft* or *Red Hill*.

Its point, however, is that it contains a preface and introduction by Raphael Samuel, bits of both of which have appeared elsewhere in other guises but which, together, form the most cogent and sustained rehearsal of his argument that the strike was a deeply conservative defence 'of the known against the unknown, the local and familiar against the remote and the gigantesque'. Certainly, the establishment may have seen in the strike the unleashing of the brute forces of anarchy and chaos (a view amply confirmed by McGregor/Tyler, whose thesauri clearly fail them in their quest for suitable epithets for the 'blind hatred' and 'raging madness' of the 'rampaging mobs', nay 'stormtroopers' of South Yorkshire).

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But, for Raphael, the dispute was a manifestation of something very different, it was a fight not for economic or political gain but 'against losing something', a struggle for no more than 'the right to stay put'. Notions of tradition, of loyalty, of an almost Burkean debt to the past (and obligation to the future): all of these characteristics flow from the strike's essentially conservative character.

There is of course much truth in this, confirmed on many pages of *Thurcroft* and *Red Hill*. But Samuel himself hints at its major limitation when he describes the strike as 'not so much an expression of community as a discovery of it'. Almost every book on the miners' strike has made mention of the network of support groups that mushroomed throughout the country; almost all, too, go on to disparage them. Lloyd and Adeney are particularly dismissive of the Labour left idea that the strike forged new bonds between urban activists and the miners; Samuel himself mourns the failure of this alliance to live up to its promise. Both perspectives seem, however, to be predicated on the assumption that the influence of the relationship was all one-way; ignoring the perception of those like Bea Campbell who have pointed out (in these pages and elsewhere) that the strike saw a considerable cultural revolution *in the coalfields*, a revolution which included the very rediscovery (aided and abetted by left academics like Samuel) of a past which had in many cases suffered the same fate as the South Wales lodge libraries, dismantled to make way for bar extensions or banks of electronic games.

Far from being restricted to the ranks of the hard left, many of the support groups were heavily peopled by representatives of that 'ex-New Left class of '68' whose supposed growing 'hostility to the strike', is, for Samuel, such a baleful characteristic of the contemporary left scene. Anyone tempted to embrace Samuel's gloomy vision (or Adeney and Lloyd's gleeful celebration of the collapse of the 'vanguardist' delusion of the city-coalfield alliance) might reflect that the 1984-5 miners' strike saw *for the first time* a real political welding of the industrial aspirations of the working class with the social concerns of the socialist intelligentsia, a welding which obviously included the education of that intelligentsia in the realities of privation and struggle; but also involved immeasurable changes in the attitudes of a goodly proportion of miners themselves to issues of law and order, race, sexuality and gender. Naturally, Raphael Samuel emphasises the conservative dimension of the women's support groups, their defence of kinship, hearth and home, and it's true that the women of *Thurcroft* and *Red Hill* pepper their histories with caveats of the 'I'm no women's libber but . . .' variety. But men of village and city will ignore that 'but' at their peril; often, the dazed incomprehension communicated so graphically in Tony Parker's book results from the realisation that a sacked miner may never work again; sometimes it results also from the loss of a wife.

In assessing the achievements of the strike, one Thurcroft activist said, 'Well, we gave them a good run for their money. In years to come there might be something to come out of that.' Almost every one of the now voluminous number of oral histories of the 1984-5 miners' strike represents, in microcosm, a fragment of the alliance out of which some of that something might come. □

PAPERBACKS

Hell and the Pacific

Peter Hoyle

FROM THE MOST unpromising beginnings, Charlie Chaplin became a fabulous, controversial success in his own lifetime. Though his films presented the cruelly treated and the lowest social strata within a sordid environment, Chaplin's little man was always full of vivacity and resilience: Chaplin had a penchant for the odd, the quirky, and not at all (despite the theme of *Modern Times*) for the anonymous cog in the machine.

In **Chaplin: His Life and Art** (Paladin, £8.95) David Robinson is particularly successful in relating incidents recorded by Chaplin or his associates to episodes in his films. His critical discussions are understandably subordinated to the thrust of the biographical narrative, but it is disappointing that he fails to isolate the specific qualities of different films. Remembering the damaging introduction of Paulette Goddard's *gamin* into *Modern Times* and the weakness of the ghetto scenes in *The Great Dictator* it is tempting to agree with Picasso who is quoted denouncing the pathos in *Limelight* as 'bad literature' and to wish there had been rather less of the sentimentality that derived in large part from Chaplin's early professional background. Although Chaplin would not have been Chaplin if more of his work had approximated to the brilliant, glacial *Monsieur Verdoux* of 1947, it is significant that so many sources testify to cold and arrogant elements in his character. Chaplin's perennially youthful genius is often mentioned, also his swift, acute responsiveness to experience and his resourceful magpie mind. The author Thomas Burke's identification of Chaplin's personality with that of Dickens is especially convincing. But ultimately Robinson is better at marshalling professional and personal details from a crowded life and scene into a readable narrative than at presenting the great clown and director in a novel or intimate way.

Life Sentence (Futura, £3.50) by Nigel Gray is a book of slice-of-life stories very close in spirit to Arthur Morrison's *Tales of Mean Streets* of the 1890s. The tone is as unremittingly sombre as the title suggests. The characters — lonely children, hard men, unloved, ageing wives, young tearaways, psychopaths — are natural victims in a seedy urban environment, but their bleak lives with the likelihood of an even bleaker future are very broadly treated, their imminent or eventual deterioration and downfall always predictable.

It is one of the weaknesses of Nigel Gray's stories that his mean streets are not particularised enough. William McIlvanney's **The Big Man** (Sceptre, £3.50) is rooted in a carefully drawn Ayrshire small town. A memorable evocation of the contrasted city also occurs in what is perhaps the novel's most powerful section, where the hero spends a week training in a Glasgow gym. Far more complex than the image of a 'brawling', 'lusty', 'raw' novel that the paperback cover suggests, *The Big Man* is also humane and sensitive with a wealth of shrewd, disabused, exact observation. McIlvanney does not hesitate to comment directly and with passionate commitment on political and social evils and the book contains a masterly description of the effects of unemployment: '. . . the constant daily rejection that surrounded you like an inimical air that was nevertheless all you had to breathe . . . It gnawed at you in almost every thought, attacking your smallest ambition . . . overwhelmed some men so effectively that they lived thereafter until they died with an almost unmitigable deadness of mood . . .'

Far from northern mean streets is Pierre Loti's **Tahiti: The Marriage of Loti** (trans. Clara Bell, KPI, £6.95), a dated mixture of fiction and travel writing by a late 19th-century specialist in the exotic who was also a French naval officer. Loti set out to charm stay-at-home readers in the French Colonial age with lush descriptions of South Sea Islands, a life of indolent sensuality and the pathos of a young Tahitian girl's desertion by her English(!) lover. If the confection could be taken more seriously the hero's sentimentality, hypocrisy and cruelty would be hair-raising.

Hard to imagine anything stranger, more exotic than the last days of Imperial China or the code of conduct of the Samurai. **With the Empress Dowager of China** (KPI, £7.95) is a determined attempt by the American portrait painter Katherine Augusta Carl to make the most of a unique opportunity to record almost the final moments of the Manchu dynasty. With only a few western innovations (steam launches, a miniature railway, gifts of motor cars and undistinguished examples of European objets d'art), the Dowager's court in 1904 still preserved a breathtakingly anarchronistic pattern of life as if

Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan
OLIVIER ROY
This penetrating study examines the history, ideology and structures of the Afghan resistance to Marxist rule. Olivier Roy sees an Islamic revolution, advocating a modernisation of Afghan society, taking place under Russian occupation, whose efforts to contain it have so far served mainly to consolidate it. Chapters cover the political, social and religious history up to 1978, the organisation of resistance, and the parties involved.
256 pp. *0 521 32833 0* **Hard covers £27.50 net**
0 521 33803 4 **Paperback £9.95 net**
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millenia of the same painstaking rituals and minute symbolic discriminations stretched out into the future. **Tales of the Samurai** by James S. de Benneville (KPI, £7.95), another of the large format Pacific Basin Books, is a reissue of a 1915 English version of a 15th-century Japanese saga, now aimed at a western audience familiar with James Clavell's *Shogun* and the two most recent Kurosawa films. It is unlikely — largely because of its jerky, declamatory style — to have the same popularity.

According to the editor, Gamini Salgado, an exotic (questionable) element in *The Dutch Courtesan*, the first of **Four Jacobean City Comedies** (Penguin Classics, £4.95), is the 'ludicrous *Dutch* accent' John Marston gives the whore Franceschina. This impediment apart, the splendidly individual and incisive play survives through its vigorous, elegant language (an elegance startlingly at variance with the lowlife subplot and many scabrous and scatological details) and the convincing treatment of Malheureux, 'the man of snow', the puritan whose moral convictions and moral fervour war with his sexual appetites. □

Peter Hoyle's novels The Man in the Iron Mask *(1984) and* Brantwood *(1986) are both published by Carcanet.*

POETRY

Hard men, soft men

John Lucas

Poems 1956-1973
THOMAS KINSELLA *Dolmen Press* £4.50
Selected Poems 1968-1983
PAUL MULDOON *Faber* £8.95 & £3.95
The Inherited Boundaries: Younger Poets of the Republic of Ireland
ed. SEBASTIAN BARRY *Dolmen Press* £6.95
Internal Exiles
DERMOT BOLGER *Dolmen Press* £4.95

THE ULSTER POET W.R. Rodgers claimed to speak for 'an abrupt people/Who like the consonants in speech/And think the soft ones cissy'. **Thomas Kinsella**, who is from the South, is certainly no cissy, but for much of the earlier part of his career he seems to have fought shy of spikiness, whether of utterance or of thought.

It would be all too easy to characterise the poetry of this period as soft and this is at least partly because he favours a kind of lush rhetoric whose characteristic movement is slow, at best with a certain grave music, at worst spongy, inert. 'Flowers whose names I do not know/Make happy signals to us. O/Did ever bees/Stumble on such a quiet before!' Perhaps not, but 'Midsummer', from which these lines come, is limply dependent on Auden's 'A Summer Night', as are other of Kinsella's early poems. What they lack is habit of thought: the result is a poetry which coos to itself, its lyricism unguardedly self-content.

One way of pinpointing this would be to note the number of occasions that the word 'sweet' makes its appearance. Another would be to say that in even so ambitious a poem as 'A Country Walk', which takes up the subject of Ireland's troubled history, you can't be sure whether Kinsella uses his chosen landscape as an intendedly apt metaphor of the troubles or as an escape from them. Kinsella sees the cross 'Of one who answered latest the phantom hag,/Tireless Rebellion, when with mouth awry/She hammered at the door, disrupting harvest'. The 'hag' is, I assume, a rebuke to those who identify the spirit of Ireland with a 'young girl . . . and the walk of a queen', but I cannot see what harvest the phantom could possibly disrupt. Harvest for whom? If to identify Ireland with the young girl is mystificatory it is no less so to imagine that Tireless Rebellion somehow prevents what would otherwise be unending fruitfulness. To some extent this is forgotten by the end of the poem, where Kinsella is beside the hastening river (Yeats's 'living stream' is not far away) and sees 'a thousand currents':

> their shallow, shifting world
> Slid on in troubled union, forging together
> Surfaces that gave and swallowed light;
> And grimly the flood divided where it swept
> And endless debris through the failing dusk
> Under the thudding span beneath my feet.

Yet even these lines, impressive as they are, leave me with the uneasy feeling that the poetry is taking refuge in its rhetoric.

I suggest, though tentatively, that Wallace Stevens' 'Sunday Morning' may be behind the closing lines of 'A Country Walk'. What is certain is that Kinsella's move to America in 1965 opened him up to the influence of other American poets. 'A Hand of Solo' reads like an apprentice piece for 'Black Mountaineering'; 'Drowsing Over the Arabian Nights' is Robert Bly out of James Wright; and 'Crab Orchard Sanctuary: Late October' couldn't exist without Roethke's 'Meditation at Oyster River'. None of these poems is bad but all of them have the air of being the work of a pasticheur. To put it rather differently: Kinsella is a careful, scrupulous craftsman, but it isn't possible to say of him that he is ever confidently his own person.

By contrast **Paul Muldoon** never seems to have had any doubts. From his first volume *New Weather* through to *Quoof*, Muldoon's sly, extraordinarily witty angle onto things of this world has made him an unmistakable presence. He can degenerate into near whimsy, his feeling for the ironies of circumstances occasionally leads him into the merely anecdotal (though he always tells a story well) and yet his *Selected Poems* contains an astonishingly high number of not merely successful but good poems, some of them outstandingly so. I do not know that it's possible to say of Muldoon that he particularly likes the consonants in speech, his verbal dexterity being such that nearly all his poems delight in the complex textures of their sounds (and this is especially true of rhyme, or more accurately his technique of allowing words at the ends of lines to brush against each other). It is, however, possible to say that under the seductive surfaces his poems are as steely, as much proof against sentimentality, as any now being written. If you don't see beneath the surface you will be misled into thinking that such poems as 'Cuba' and 'Quoof' are soft. They aren't, any more than are the four-liners 'Blemish' or 'Mink':

> A mink escaped from a mink-farm
> in South Armagh
> is led to the grave of Robert Nairac
> by the fur-lined hood of his anorak.

I'm not at all sure why Faber think we need a *Selected*, unless it's to imply that the volume sums up a career so far and that from now on matters will be different. I *am* sure that if you've only enough money to spend on one book of poems then this should be it.

The best reason that I can see for buying **The Inherited Boundaries** is that it has a number of poems by Matthew Sweeney. Apart from him there's a large amount of tat on show which almost buries the occasional good poem by Thomas McCarthy, Aidan Carl Mathews and Dermot Bolger. At all events, Sebastian Barry's claims for his chosen poets are inflated, silly and sometimes meaningless. (What on earth are 'the nervous provisions of Yeats' — groceries with the twitch, perhaps?)

Bolger's new volume **Internal Exiles** is a very uncertain mixture. It aims for a laconic or, more rarely, directly outraged or even accepting statement about alienation and solitariness, but it overdoes the rhetoric and so ends up being more often than not sentimental. (The poem for Robert Tressell is an especially irritating example.) Besides, for all Bolger's claims to offer at least a 'glimpse' of history, his refusal to confront or at least attempt to account for what causally lies behind his modern wasteland means that he ends up as a latter-day naturalistic writer: all surface and therefore nearer to being cissy than can possibly be good. □

ABORTION

Question of violence

Susan Dowell

Abortion and Women's Choice: The State, Sexuality and Reproductive Freedom
ROSALIND POLLACK PETCHESKY *Verso* £29.95 & £8.95
Abortion Practice in Britain and the United States
COLIN FRANCOME *Allen & Unwin* £18 & £7.95

THE WIDESPREAD availability of legal abortion in the USA followed a crucial Supreme Court ruling in 1973. Legalisation was seen as a significant breakthrough of a resurgent feminist consciousness. Not so, it merely drew up the battle lines, says Rosalind Petchesky. Her forceful, densely argued book describes the war — waged, under Reagan, against feminism, with 'pro-family' anti-abortion rhetoric fulfilling the need for a fresh rallying cry to defeat soft liberalism at home and communism abroad, to make America great again.

Petchesky's **Abortion and Women's Choice** tells the history of reproductive politics over the last two centuries — the period in which she sees the state, in implementing population policies, as assuming control over female sexuality and fertility. The 1973 ruling did not concede the moral or sexual autonomy of women but, rather,

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the autonomy and integrity of the (male-dominated) medical profession. It adapted the liberal/bourgeois concept of 'rights of privacy' to the contingencies of populationist ideology and changed sexual mores.

Universal availability was short-lived; only four years elapsed between Roe v. Wade and the first Hyde Amendment restricting Federal funding for Medicaid patients, but it was long enough to take the steam out of women's own self-help networks — just when new technologies like vacuum aspiration made safe abortion possible without hospitalisation and its consequent reliance on mainstream medical facilities. Petchesky, however, dismisses the importance of counter-cultural traditions and argument in her overriding concern to locate lawful, clinical abortion rights as central to a 'political perspective that is both Marxist and feminist'.

In Britain we were less tempted to see legalisation — in 1967 — as a triumph of feminism. It was more an essential, reformist pre-requisite for the development of a movement whose roots where clearly and avowedly in leftist politics *anyway*. The Steel Bill was argued and implemented as a progressive measure to clean up the back streets and bring abortion practice into line with the egalitarian precepts of the NHS. While women's particular medical and social needs are prime casualties of Thatcherite policies, attacks on abortion *per se* have been sporadic and sectarian in origin. That particular crusade — despite the customary right-wing packaging — has not been adopted by main-line Thatcherites. Nor does this government need to toe the line of our religious factions. They're not so powerful as those in the States and, even with the Established Church, conflict (and collusion) have centred around monetarist and defence issues. Besides, the British abortion rate, according to Francome's **Abortion Practice**, remains less than half that for the USA. Opponents here have not resorted to fire-bombing abortion clinics.

All these factors seem to create and pervade the rather cooler climate of the abortion debate here and to soften the likely impact — and, possibly, the usefulness — of Petchesky's book on a British feminist readership. After nearly 20 years of legalised abortion, some broader based review of its practice and implications is not automatically sinister. Now that *some* of the shame and secrecy of illegality have been cleared away, there is a space in which to explore the 'mixed feelings' to which Lynne Segal referred (*NS* 2 January) and which she convincingly showed to have been acknowledged in feminist thinking and strategy, on all aspects of motherhood, throughout the Seventies: feelings of sorrow, of mourning, even perhaps a hope that unwanted pregnancies and abortions will one day end. Petchesky's insistence on consigning all doubt and most debate to a revisionist/backlash spectrum, or to the neo-conservative maternalism warned against in Segal's article, seems itself a 'worrying retreat' from the debate's complexities and casts a censorious atmosphere over her book. For example, she characterises the poet Adrienne Rich's writing on abortion (in Rich's ground-breaking work *Of Woman Born*) as a 'victimising, victim-blaming position': male derived and, like all expressions of sadness, culturally received.

Rich's offending chapter is entitled 'Violence: the heart of maternal darkness' in which she writes: 'abortion is violence: a deep and desperate violence inflicted by a woman upon, first of all, herself. It is the offspring of a more pervasive violence . . .' There are increasing numbers of women for whom an authentically feminist non-violence is a philosophy and a process which makes sense both of female rage and of female vision. This vision fully endorses sexual reproductive autonomy as the central plank of the women's movement platform, but cannot refuse to confront the fact that abortion — without which, as things stand, we cannot claim that centre — is unique, the only plank that is an assault on the life and well-being of others. The personhood of the fetus, however defined, whenever conceded or however meaningless this is without the protection and consent of the mother, cannot be wished away or rationalised away. Or languaged away, as in terms like Petchesky's 'post-conceptive' control.

Most Christian feminists, like myself, reject nearly all the arguments put forth by male theologians: the 'innocence' of the fetus (so beloved of the moral majority as a symbol of pristine nationalism) which has justified the valuing of pre-natal life over that of the born, which in turn underscores a pesistent refusal to connect the 'sanctity of life' to the uncompromising pacifism many Christians discern in the gospel and which was lived by the early church. More vehemently, Christian feminists repudiate the entire woman-blaming context in which these arguments have been traditionally presented — in which, as one US nun put it, women are seen as 'ensouled uteruses'. But, in an outrageous put-down, Petchesky writes that most religious feminists 'think of abortion as a matter of "private conscience" rather than a social or sexual need'. Devaluing and misrepresenting all other arenas of moral and political discourse will not secure a feminist future for our daughters in the shifting sexual landscape.

Petchesky writes clearly and informatively about teenage sexuality. Francome's study, too, concentrates heavily on the young/single and teenage population, on whom two thirds of abortions are performed. Both works explode the myth of licentious hedonism so often imputed to teenage sexuality and to which abortion is said to have contributed. The Francome study reveals a 'startling, disturbing level of ignorance' among young people about their own sexuality. His commitment to more efficient contraception and the need to reduce unwanted pregnancy is challenged in Petchesky's analysis, where abortion as 'back up' to the diaphragm or Captain Condom is convincingly defended as signalling an unwillingness among young women to trade off their health and reproductive future for 100 per cent effective but dangerous contraception.

But, in this post-Aids era, her talk of 'the right to lives our sex lives as we wish and with dignity' sounds rather hollow. The absence of any analysis of compulsory heterosexuality sounds oddly old-fashioned; as does her assertion that women-centred perceptions of sexuality — as multi-pleasured physicality, diffuse, independent of penetration — have not impinged on the popular feminist consciousness. However marginalised, these may be important life-lines to a new sexual culture in which women's autonomy and women's choices can be fully realised. □

FOOTNOTES

From his very first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, **James Baldwin** has been as much a political as literary firebomb.

Latterly Baldwin has joined his voice to the growing chorus of anger over white **South Africa**'s intransigence — notably, in an open letter to Desmond Tutu in this magazine (*NS* 23.8.85). Now, more pragmatically, he has devised a partial solution to the worries of writers about the South African cultural boycott: in particular, for those reluctant to dam the flow of ideas/information in and out of that country, an answer to what they might do with royalties whose acceptance could imply support for apartheid.

The suggestion that Baldwin has made to the *NS* is as follows: writers uneasy with royalties from South Africa should think of transferring them to International PEN (an organisation with a long, long history of combatting repression of authors), who will use them to help the families of authors imprisoned for their writing in South Africa. Since the introduction of the outrageous 11 December press controls, it's a group that grows daily larger.

Francis King, president of International PEN, has told the *NS* of his sympathy for Baldwin's plan. He does, however, say that it must go before the next PEN delegates' assembly (in April this year, in Lugano) for formal ratification. Writers who feel that the plan should be approved might like to make their support of it known, by writing to King at International PEN, 38 King Street, London WC2. And watch this space for notice of the scheme's formal implementation.

○

Closer to home, there's disquiet among authors about **Public Lending Right** (PLR). Ever since 1979, authors have been entitled, by law, to an annual payment related to how often their books are borrowed from public libraries. It is, in the current benighted climate, one of the very few government subsidies to literature.

The total annual sum paid out is, as it was in 1979, approximately £2m — as distinct, for example, from the £10.03m granted for 1987/8 to the British Film Institute — and the fact that the sum hasn't grown in eight years is what's causing the authors' rebelliousness. As is pointed out by the Writers' Guild (The TUC-affiliated union which played a great part in getting PLR instigated in the first place), as more and more authors keep joining the scheme the rate per borrowing lessens each year (has lessened this year by another six per cent) while, obviously, inflation is also devaluing the worth of the payments.

Rumours of best-selling authors raking in £5,000 from PLR annually may have made library-users cynical. In practice, this year — out of a total of 13,000 registered authors — 59 will receive that maximum pay-out. Ninety-two per cent of those registered will get less than £100.

Harriett Gilbert

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Parenting

Root Cartwright, Chairman, British Organisation of Non-parents (BON)
We are all consciously involved in our private economic struggles and quite simply motherhood (*NS* 2 Jan.) has always been and continues to be the ideal way for women to retreat from this struggle — by handing over complete economic responsibility to a male partner: and while feminists have had much to say on the subject of the 'isolation, conflict and economic dependence most women face as full-time mothers' it must be acknowledged that this situation is entered into voluntarily by those unable or unwilling to embrace alternative ways of life.

In the context of the global population situation, no one can any longer claim the 'right' to parenthood — it must be discussed in terms of a privilege and a responsibility (which would at least make a change from the disastrous cocktail of sentiment and resentment which characterises most parent/child relationships).

Not until all women — and men: parenthood is NOT a feminist issue — come to regard child-rearing as only one possible way to fulfilment and the choice not to have children becomes legitimate and respected, can there be any material change in the condition and life-opportunities of the majority of women. Inseparable from this change in consciousness must be the positive dismantling of the nuclear family with its debilitating matrix of emotional blackmail, and the creation of wholly new and enabling structures within which children can be people and not possessions and pets.

There is nothing wrong with a person who decides for any number of reasons not to have children, and while feminism should have provided a framework within which many more people could be making such a decision, it is sad to see that the current sentimental/conformist climate of post-70s backlashism has begun to deny the opportunity before most people have even become aware of it.

Julian Rathbone, Christchurch, Dorset
In place of shared parenting Lynne Segal offered 'increased provision for childcare and building up networks of supportive people'.

Shared parenting overcomes feelings of isolation even when each parent is still alone in their child-minding. These negative feelings arise when the parenting is full-time, unrelieved and above all undiscussed with the other parent. If the parenting is genuinely 'shared' 50-50 with some time — evenings, weekends, holidays, when both parents are parenting together — and if both parents can talk freely to each other about how their side of the parenting is going, it is better for the children (assuming there are not more than three under school age) *and* the parents.

'Shared parenting may not change power relations between men and women'. The idea that the women who invite the men they share a roof with to share in parenting are doing it as part of a strategy in a power struggle is, well, let's say — unhelpful, and leave it at that.

I really do believe shared parenting is to be encouraged and promoted by everyone. The immediate benefits to children and parents are incalculable. It is a fundamental part of what will be a comparatively slow shift in gender roles that may take several generations. For finally it is the children who are being changed by it: children who are brought up through infancy by parents whose perceived roles in the household are identical will quite possibly reach school without being imprinted with society's ideas about gender, and they might even survive indoctrination at school to do an even better job on their children than we did on them.

Mary W. Pugsley, Okehampton, Devon
I can offer you a practical example of the result of 'mothering' in this 'market economy country'. In 1946 I gave up a reasonably good job to take on the more serious one of bringing up a healthy, useful family. None of the family including my husband needed a doctor all the time I was 'mothering' them, and one son is now a vet and the other a policeman.

I am now 69 and at my recent hearing for divorce the registrar judged that my ex-husband could not live on less than £75 per week but that I can live on £42. The court asked me how much I could earn if I went out to work! My 28 years of marriage and work for the next generation is valued at: £29 pension, £7.50 maintenance (half coming out of his tax), £6 Social Security. I thought that this was one unfortunate injustice but my solicitor, barrister and the DHSS assure me that it is the normal result.

June Benn, London SE3
It is as much a practical problem as a political one. Only by male children seeing fathers taking over domestic work will we ever change society. How many men in fact would choose to be 'mothers' with all that that word has implied for thousands of years? But can we compel men to change radically? I doubt it in this society. It has not happened in so-called revolutionary societies either. So we must expect change to be only gradual, working through future generations.

In the majority of 'feminist' households, the woman with children has two jobs, feels she does neither very well and feels guilty that it is her 'fault'. If she devotes herself to the fairly full-time job of looking after young children still other people are ready to pronounce her 'guilty' too. The only answer, which is not an answer, is not to have babies. That does not seem very likely to happen.

Even if you work out some compromise, you are grieving the loss of your once needy children when they have grown up to do without you. Really can women *ever* win?

Frankie Rickford, London N16
Your cover illustration — a grotesque caricature of a huge screaming baby — makes the most of one of the few remaining opportunities for getting a laugh at the expense of oppressed people. You wouldn't have dreamed of using anything similar if the piece had been about any ethnic group, about women, about people with disabilities, or about old people.

Our society is deeply hostile to young children as anyone who has taken one to a restaurant or a meeting will know. Children under the age of two are the most vulnerable group in the population to being violently assaulted or murdered — by adults.

It is not children who isolate, overwork and impoverish mothers. The appalling conditions of parenting in this society won't be transformed by scapegoating babies, even if you are Only Joking.

Petroflutters

Katie Mallett, Canvey Island, Essex
Might I suggest that MURCO is a partner whom the relatives think not quite nice (a relationship that bordered on the seedy) (*NS* 19/26 Dec.). I believe there is also a petroleum named NAFTA. This of course would be someone the family thinks NAFF. OCCIDENTAL, on the other hand, would be a one night stand.

News on Sunday

John Pilger, London SW4
I was pleased to read last week (*NS* 9 Jan.) that many of my ideas will be used in *News on Sunday*, but it was strange indeed to see my own expressions deployed as counter argument to specific criticisms I had made . . . 'First radical paper for generations' (actually, one generation) . . . 'no fake concerns' . . . 'a popular tabloid of the non-sectarian left that will not preach', and so on. In the kind of paper we were trying to produce honesty ought to have had a special value; and it is merely fatuous to say that there is 'unanimous support' for the present editorial policies.

Last week's sanitised version of events denigrates the concerns of a great many people who have worked for *News on Sunday*, in a voluntary, freelance or staff capacity, for years and who have watched with alarm and dismay the recent direction of the paper. I always felt that these people bore the conviction of *News on Sunday* to be truly original. They have been pushed aside by the present editorial steamroller, with its devotion to Murdoch 'packaging', and now they are being told that it is disloyal to debate openly the nature of *their* paper.

When a representative of a regional group went to the Manchester office to enquire into what was going on, he was told that it was all to do with 'a personality clash' between myself and the editor; a dishonest assessment. That very different views of journalism were at issue was not considered important.

News on Sunday has been in embryonic form for three years and has become something of an instant institution of the left, and like all institutions it rewards those who wish to perpetuate it, regardless of what it stands for. In other words, the paper, as a pre-ordained *cause*, must be defended against all criticism, irrespective of its editor's belief that people do not want information and any attempt to give it to them in an unpatronising, credible way is to be dismissed as 'intellectual'. This was the message buried in last week's *News on Sunday* handout. And how very British it is. In the *Spectator*, Paul Johnson expounded precisely the same belief. And look how 'radical' he is.

'To maintain this belief', a journalist of distinction and a supporter of *News on Sunday* wrote to me last week, 'is an insult to working-class people'. It assumes that the thirst for knowledge which fuelled working-class demands

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for better education, that gave rise to the WEA, that sent thousands of people to 'night school' after work, was a phenomenon of its time and has now been exhausted. I do not think this is true; I believe the Murdoch papers, driving out the kind of journalism which legitimised the aspirations of working-class people, have robbed them of a vital source of information and inspiration when both are sorely needed.

John Rentoul's piece was often inaccurate; for instance, I was not, 'forced to say' on 16 December that I had been wrong about Keith Sutton's appointment. The issue came to a head on that date precisely because I had been saying for more than six weeks that those of us who chose him had made a mistake. In spite of widespread agreement about this, nothing was done and the problem was finally consumed by committees, which stripped away any remaining decision-making authority I had. A modicum of courage, when it counted, would have seen us on our way.

James Brennan, Brennan Publications, Derby
Surely there should be no attempt to launch *News on Sunday* in the same shark-infested seas as *News of the World*? John Pilger is right in objecting to a *Sun*-style paper, given *NoS*'s declared aims. The left-wing *Reynolds News* declined and eventually disappeared when its management decided to compete in the Sunday sex-and-crime market.

Success with a principled 500,000-sale, left-of-centre paper would be preferable, in an age of right-wing media dominance, to relentless struggle and likely failure in the corrupt millionaire market.

Perhaps I should declare an interest (and a sense of guilt) as a college journalism tutor 20 years ago when the present editor of the *Sun* was a promising student. Where did I go wrong?

GLEB: for the record

Tony Millwood, Chair, GLEB, London SE1
In his article on the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) (*NS* 6 Dec.) John Rentoul claims that 'strictly off the record, a slanging match has broken out' between the 'hard and soft lefts'. Well strictly for the record it has not broken out, at least not as far as GLEB's new owners and management are concerned. While we welcome serious debate, GLEB's main concern, as it has been since its inception in 1982, is to develop and manage socially responsible investment to provide jobs of good quality *and* accessible to all social groups. The *London Labour Briefing* articles pitched discussion at such low level that they in no way contributed to any 'debate'.

GLEB is now owned and controlled by 12 London boroughs. Its new Corporate Plan to be launched in January reflects the consensual view of its members rather than the thinking of a 'soft left' clique. Our experience as well as that of the other enterprise boards shows that to deliver practical results we must concern ourselves with efficiency and with companies' long-term prospects for survival and growth. Already this has been criticised by some as an indication of the new GLEB's rejection of 'social' objectives. Quite the reverse; the 'social' aspects of GLEB's work — equal opportunities programmes, training, worker participation and social ownership — still figure prominently in our approach but they have far more chance of being realised in firms with a strong future. They are an essential part of a strategy to achieve long-term economic recovery according to much broader criteria than those which dominate much current economic debate.

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DIVORCEE, 53, some-time divorced teacher, left-wing, often exhausted, often broke, seeks liberated male for relaxing company – cinema, walks, literature. Car owner appreciated. Birmingham. Box (03)4344 W3.9

EDUCATED CATHOLIC widow, age 58, tall, seeks to correspond/meet sincere RC widower, interested in intellectual & spiritual life chiefly. Box (03)4348. W3.10

ENERGETIC, INTELLECTUAL, sensual Manchester man seeks attractive woman to share fun, love, happiness, sensitivity, caring and humour are important. Photo appreciated. Chris, 30. Box (03)4363. W3.11

FEMALE, LATE 30s, secure, attractive, single parent, interested in politics, people, learning new things — seeks attractive, dependable but not dependent man — who knows how to share. West Midlands. Box (02)4325. W2.13

FEMALE, 38, warm, caring, anti-sexist, graduate, 5' 6", pretty, young-looking, interests: wining/dining, cinema, theatre, opera going, country walking; dislikes: sport, pubs; seeks happy, well-balanced, very affectionate male, 37-42, for intense, mutually-caring, lasting relationship. E. London. Box (03)4349. W3.12

FLOATING VOTER (lecturer, 40) seeks right party. If you're friendly, fizzy, feminine, free, musical, under 35, canvass me. photo welcome. Avon-London. Box (03)4364. W3.13

FRIENDLY, INTELLIGENT, attractive 40s woman, living South Coast, bored with being independent, seeks strong, sensitive, humorous man to share life's fun with, and for mutual support during the occasional bad bits. Box (03)4351. W3.14

GENTLEMAN, LONDON visitor, 50s, solvent, passionate with appropriate stamina, desires London lady, preferably retired, who can be discreet yet joyous, uninhibited lover. Photo please. Box (01)4290. W1.6

GENTLEMAN, YOUNG 70, divorced, home lovely village Southern Spain, seeks attractive, stimulating, widow/divorcee, independent means, 48-58, country-loving. Interests: music, arts, travel. Essential warm, loving dispositions. No hang-ups, to achieve close personal, stable relationship. Box (03)4367. W3.15

HEARTSEARCHERS PLEASE NOTE that telephone bookings can only be accepted if accompanied by a Credit Card Number (Access, American Express, Barclaycard, Diners' Club, Visa). N27.18

INTELLIGENT, SINCERE unattached woman, 50, seeks intelligent heterosexual male who maybe confused about his sexuality. Long-term relationship. Box (03)4342. W3.16

LEEDS: BALD but friendly male, 45, 5' 8", fit, attractive, good company, own teeth, wide interests, hill-walker, seeks long-term relationship with warm, lively, intelligent lady. Box (03)4376. W3.17

LONDON CIVIL SERVANT, 40, (target: Sir Humphrey's job before retirement) Anglican, Taurus, varied interests, seeks cuddly young lady. Object: fun, friendship, hopefully stable relationship, kid(s) to spoil. No redheads. Leo's, feminists. Box (03)4343. W3.18

LONDON LADY, attractive, tall, slim, smart, car owner, Continental, seeks pleasant gentleman over sixty years, for companionship. Box (03)4347. W3.19

LONELY LEFT MALE (30s) seeks entanglement (maybe more) with intelligent, non-smoking, humorous woman (25-35). Interests include: travel, politics, sport, wining and dining (in any order). South Wales. Box (03)4340. W3.20

MAN, 62, retired, arts graduate, interested in most of the arts, medium build, presentable, resident Central London, seeks relationship with civilised, independently minded woman. Box (03)4361. W3.21

NEW TO GLASGOW. Male, 28, seeking intelligent and free thinking woman. Interests: philosophy, music, arts, sciences, food. Age immaterial, don't forget Rousseau! Where are you? Box (03)4341. W3.22

OLD FRIENDS: an introduction agency for the over forties. Loneliness is not inevitable. Details from: Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, London N5 2DB. 01-226 5432. N15.31

SEARCH CONTINUES for a prof., fortyish lady, by Indian, 50ish, divorced, College lecturer, veggy/teeto/non-smoker. Socialist ideals. View marriage. Box (03)4352. W3.23

SINGLE, WELL-EDUCATED male, 48, wishes to meet lady in London area. Interests: good conversation, eating out. Box (03)4346. W3.24

SOCIALIST, WRITER-ARTIST (m.), seeks relationship with interesting, 40-ish, woman. Extras: musically/visually aware, loves hills, literature, women's politics, life. Reciprocate letter, photo. Anywhere/North. Box (03)4353. W3.25

TALL, SLIM, unattached male professional, 41, arts background, creative and romantic, practical and caring, seeks attractive career woman, 33-42, to share life's pleasures. Brighton. Box (03)4362. W3.26

THIS BE THE YEAR! No messing; no evasion; no ducking responsibility. Alternative woman, psychologist, feminist, optimist, humourist, socialist – what a list! Determined find **that man:** 33-45; sane, independent, solvent, professional, handsome, intelligent, caring. SE London/Kent. Box (03)4354. W3.27

TYNESIDE LECTURER (39), seeks intelligent, attractive, non-smoking female companion to share films, theatre & countryside. Box (03)4345. W3.28

WARM, SPIRITED woman, un-British, un-conventional, wide interests, working, offers friendship, weekend companionship to unstuffy, intelligent, out-going, youthful man (60+), not emotionally dead. London. Box (03)4379. W3.29

WOULD ANY tall, cultivated, professional gentleman care to meet sexy lady, 60+, for occasional companionship London/Wiltshire. Interests: theatre, travel, the arts, sex. Box (03)4359. W3.30

YORKSHIRE WOMAN, 50, adventurous, attractive, affectionate, professional, left-wing, open mind, divorced. Seeks active, music-art loving man, similar age, for mutually caring relationship. Box (03)4350. W3.31

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WOODY ALLEN? RIOJA ALTA?
Needing intelligent company to share it with? Contact:
DRAWING DOWN THE MOON
The thinking person's dating agency
7-11 Kensington High Street, London, W8 5NP. Tel 01-938 1721 for free brochure. Barclaycards welcome.

PURSUITS

DISCOVER IRELAND Semi-retired Irish businessman, unattached, much travelled abroad. Seeks congenial, enlightened acquaintances (preferably female) for occasional rural/city, social/cultural pursuits. Friendship, courtesies reciprocated in Ireland. Idea expanded thro' correspondences. Box (03)4360. W3.2

Reminder!!! Box Replies

When answering more than one advertisement ONLY stamp the postal envelope NOT the individual replies — send them please to:
Box . . . . .
New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane,
LONDON EC1R 3AU.

BILLBOARD

Enquiries: Laura Berryman 01-251 5487

Music

SOUND RECORDING. *Women Only.* OVA courses introduce 4 track recording principles, including use of the mixing console, tape machines, rhythm and voice workshop, microphones and outboard equipment. These courses run until March Sats 10am-5pm at OVA Music Studio, Highgate Newtown Community Centre, 25 Bertram Street, London N.19. Tel. 01-281 2528.

Theatre

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629. Until 18 Jan. at 7.30pm. **LOUDER THAN WORDS MIME GALA** in aid of Barnardo's.

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252 Olivier (open stage) **THE PIED PIPER, KING LEAR.** Lyttelton (proscenium stage) **TONS OF MONEY.** Cottesloe (small auditorium) **THREE MEN ON A HORSE.** See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

Theatre

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY 01-628 8795/638 8891 24 hr info 628 2295. Eves. 7.30pm, Thurs & Sat mats 2pm.

BARBICAN THEATRE: A PENNY FOR A SONG by John Whiting 16-22 Jan. **MISALLIANCE** by Bernard Shaw 23-24 Jan. **THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR** returns 28-29 Jan.

THE PIT: HERESIES by Deborah Levy 16-22 Jan. **PRINCIPIA SCRIPTORIAE** Richard Nelson 23-24 Jan. **THE ARCHBISHOP'S CEILING** Arthur Miller 26-29 Jan.

Ad bookings:
Call Laura Berryman
01-253 2001

AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL JANET BANKS 01-251 5487

Deadline: 4pm Mondays

TUES 20 JAN

PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE. 7 p.m. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Talk on 'Conflict Resolution in the Man/Woman Relationship' by Shiela Thompson. Charge 75p. UB 40's free. The Progressive League caters for mind, body and intellectual stimulus. Subscription £8 per year; married couples £14.50. Ring 01-586 2274.

WED 21 JAN

PAUL JOHNS (CND Chair) and Russell Profitt (PPC Lewisham East) debate Nuclear Morality with Alan Lee Williams (Peace Through NATO Chair) and John Maples MP. Riverdale Hall, Lewisham Centre, Molesworth Street, 8 p.m. Org. Lewisham CND.

SAT 24 JAN

REEL IMAGES?: Day-School on Film & Sexuality. Films: Only Angels Have Wings & Amy!, with Judith Williamson. 10.30-5. £3/£2. Curzon Cinema, Loughborough. Details: 0509 230629 or 235628.

COURSES

GREEN POLITICS COURSE
10 week evening course,
starting **27 January, 6pm–8.45pm.**
Cost: **£12**
(or **£1** for unwaged living within ILEA).
Details from: **Dept. of Sociology, City of London Polytechnic, Old Castle St, London E1 7NT.**
Tel: **01-283 1030 Ext 541.**

CONFERENCE

TELEVISION & THE FAMILY: A New Agenda. 25/26 February. Conference at Institute of Education, London. Contact: Janet Willis, BFI on 01-437 4355 for details.

VIDEO

THE TUBE STRIKE
The Story Behind the Headlines
'One Man' – 2,000 jobs is a 25 minute video about the issues in the present crisis on London's Underground.
Available to hire or buy from:
London Strategic Policy Unit, TPG Room 501, Middlesex House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1. Tel. 01-633 3613

FORTHCOMING

SYMPOSIUM 87. Lesbian & Gay Writers in Europe discuss AIDS, Censorship, the Social Context etc. Speakers include Francis King, Gerd Brantenberg, James Kirkup, Gill Hanscombe, Jeremy Seabrook, Tom Wakefield, Barbara Burford, David Rees, Martin Sherman, Jackie Forster & Ed White. 17/20 April, Conway Hall. £25 incl lunches. Details: Box 8252 London WC1N 3XX.

AGENDA
£5 for 25 words
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BACKCHAT

FIRST PERSON

Nervous peace

Paul Virilio

AT LAST we have said goodbye to the year of signs. 1986 was a fertile year for major accidents: signs in the sky, like the apocalyptic fate of the US space-shuttle . . . signs in the clouds of a radioactive Europe . . . signs in the waters of the Rhine. Signs of all our private fears; tremors of land, sea and air. Signs of nerves strained to breaking point by all the televised outrages of war on our doorsteps, everyday terrorism in Paris, London or Berlin.

Indeed we haven't been celebrating the start of the new year so much as the end of the old one, relieved to have put it behind us, only too happy to forget. A strange kind of 'celebration', a perverse, back-to-front festivity — but surely one typical of our times. All our daily activities, public or private, have become so fast and frenzied that we have come to *desire lack*, to prefer absence to presence, self-denial to satisfaction, profit or plenty. And perhaps that was the real significance of last Christmas — not so much the excuse for the consumer binge that packs out shops and places of entertainment but rather that 'nervous peace of a sick heart' prayed for by the poet Henri Michaux: a kind of sensory deprivation, the pleasure of disillusionment with material progress . . .

We no longer go anywhere except by staying put. Instead of finding relaxation and renewal in the fleeting distractions of travel, we get our distractions on the spot, in that *social passivity* which has led our developed world to shroud itself in internal comfort, in the pleasures of an ingrown vitality where the absence of action becomes the height of passion. A society of habitual sedentaries, whose members seek not the suffering and dying sometimes ascribed to western masochism, but to *be* dead.

The uses we have made of new technology have effectively confined us to the home, under the house-arrest of telematics and computer home-work, turning what was formerly the TV audience into the 'tele-actors' of instant interaction, exiled from real space and real human contact. It's quite remarkable how our secret desire for sensory deprivation converges with the technical means of achieving it, the computer-assisted concept of life. We meet at safe distances, get together without getting together, enjoy the safe and sterile pleasures of anonymous telecommunications, of the Walkman, of sex-via-MINITEL*.

There's no mistaking what lies behind all this — the break-up of the neighbourhood, loss of involvement in where we live and those we live with. And the break-up too, of course, of the nuclear family, replaced by the dubious advantages of the part-time couple, and one-parent families. No more 'natural' unit of population. Perhaps we can expect a future of bionic Christmases, strictly scientific nativities? We haven't just ushered in the new year but rather the dawn of the era of lack, of compulsory mortification for the unproductive and immobile, because from now on everything comes to us, good or bad, and we don't have to go and look for it . . .

May Christmas have been a holiday for all our fellow-sufferers from nervous exhaustion. Peace on earth to all god's computer-aided creatures, to all men of no will, to all the visually-handicapped confined to their armchairs, to all the motor-handicapped with their various prostheses to help get them from home to work, home to leisure at the weekend, or the year's end, when the annual flight into Eygpt is organised, as always, by the traffic police and emergency services in the expectation of one more motorway massacre of the innocents . . .

Asked what he thought was the greatest disaster of modern times, one old countryman from the Ile de France immediately replied, 'the news'. 'You see,' he explained, 'for me the 1914 war broke out overnight, we never saw it coming. On the very eve of the national mobilisation we were completely calm. No one here dreamt there could be a war — even though we're less than a hundred miles from Paris. But nowadays with all this radio and TV, you get the feeling you're *always* on the eve of a war or some other terrible catastrophe, and it's unbearable.'

Peace at Christmas, then, might be a break from being constantly informed, that is, completely *disinformed* about ourselves, about all the tiny events of our lives from which we could form judgments and get a sense of reality, events which are lost in the barrage of political and economic facts and figures. There is a fatal interaction between our lack of any intimate reality and the crushing presence, *in real time*, of televised news.

What will it mean when we are all plugged into cable systems of local networks, saturated in satellite news, up-to-the-minute bulletins, newsflashes and video-clips? To what will we look forward when there's absolutely no need to wait for anything, when we ourselves have become films and TV shows in the homes of remote interlocutors thanks to vision-phones and tele-conferencing? Unfortunately it's unlikely such questions will ever be asked, either by those they concern or those in power, governments, employers or unions. Cathodemocracy [*la democratie cathodique*] is *in vitro* democracy, which doesn't involve elections or referendums (except in the form of TV games); opinion polls are purely a matter of audience response within the rules of the media . . .

The *electronic day* of telecommunications doesn't relate to the day of astronomical tables, and the indirect light of electronic images replaces electric light just as the latter not so long ago replaced natural daylight. Isn't it the case that our 'cities of light' today aren't illuminated by neon and street-lamps so much as by the automatic cameras watching over our streets and public places? By the use of fibre-optic cables the remote-control camera and its monitor screen has taken over from the urban and rural electrification with which we began the century. To really *see*, we now not only drive back the darkness but eliminate the obstacle of *distance* by the relentless penetration of automatic filming and recording.

The Christmas star, the candles on the tree, the bright lights of shop-windows — something else

MINITEL is the name of the advanced teletext system now available to all telephone subscribers in France. Its introduction has led, among other things, to a boom in on-screen contact ads and offers of sexual services.

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has now taken their place, these new and indiscreet illuminations, the *cathode windows* of a video regime, in which we ourselves are displayed, like gifts. □

Paul Virilio's latest books are L'Espace Critique *(Christian Bourgois) and* Guerre et Cinema 1 *(Cahiers du Cinéma). In English,* Pure War *and* Speed and Politics *are both published by Semiotext(e)/Foreign Agents, dist. Central Books.*
Translated by Malcolm Imrie

FOOD

Only connect

Colin Spencer

MUCH OF THE INTELLECTUAL case against vegetarianism is that it involves a somewhat sentimental view of life, as though farm animals were, in reality, characters out of Beatrix Potter.

The fact that people radically change their lives out of a horror for killing animals, when our world is rife with inhumanity to our fellow beings, has always struck me as muddled and misplaced compassion. Yet, if you look at it another way, if we do not respect all living creatures in their context, then we are more predisposed to maim, unjustly imprison and kill human beings. Respect for life is bound indissolubly with the smallest details of our most commonplace attitudes. Feminists rightly have rapped us over the knuckles on the use of language; our attitude to the animals we eat is as hidebound as referring to God as Him.

The problem can be approached from one of two ends. You can say that respect for our fellow citizens must extend to the way we treat animals, if only to halt the brutalising of animal rearers and slaughterers. I have seen rows of women and girls in chicken factories working as automata with bits of dead flesh and blood flying around them, deafened by the noise of machinery and Radio One, and wondered what chance they had after such a squalid and Dickensian ordeal of leading kind and considerate lives.

On the other hand, the orthodox vegetarian argument dismisses the effects on human beings and proposes, simply, that factory farming exploits *animals*, in vile conditions. Certainly, when you know the facts, horror stories abound, and it is not difficult to be moved to sorrow and pity for these animals — from the sow and the veal calf imprisoned in crates little bigger than themselves, to the broiler chicken and the laying hen in the battery unit, all treated as food profits instead of live animals. The British are quick to feel on such occasions and this is where the whole subject can easily be shoved aside as being suitable only for sentimentalists, or those on an income sufficient for liberal sympathies.

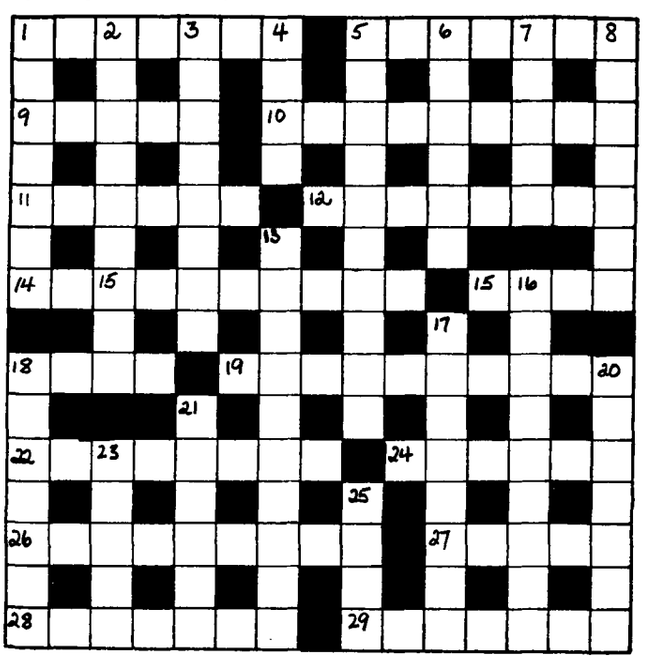
Last year, the BBC, I am told, found the film requested from China for Tom Vernon's programme on the most delicious food around the world too shocking to be used. The Chinese chose to show a happy Chinese family with grandmother and small children going out to each lunch. Lunch was live carp. They ate it while it was still alive. They chose their fish, it was gutted and scored, then the bottom half was deep fried. The family ate the body of the fish while urging the smallest child to pour rice wine over the head so as to watch the fish's mouth open and close. It is reminiscent of the story from Chinese gastronomy which tells of the man who prepared his duck's feet by deep frying them three times while the duck was alive. Between the cooking processes, the duck swan around in a pool.

These Chinese tales are nauseating to western sensibilities, but there are films of how we rear animals for the table which are equally revolting. Only we choose not to see them; as we choose not to know what goes on in a battery unit with its debeaked and partially featherless end-of-lay hens. Certainly, television ponders seriously on whether they would show the public film of how we rear animals for food. They would certainly never show such film in a programme which celebrates gourmet food.

There is a fixed distinction in our minds between facts which will support an enticing view of food and those which communicate the reality of rearing and slaughter: the *foie gras* being prepared for table, but not the goose being force fed. There

Weekend Crossword 1544

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1544, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 27 January.



ACROSS

1. They provide fire when the old lady has a bad chest (7)
5. The composer takes nothing away from the battlefield (7)
9. Words which show that the celibate go without love (5)
10. Loot is scattered during a battle on the stage (9)
11. Warm up in the fire he attempts to light (6)
12. Dickens character who makes one read superficially by post (8)
14. Merton lies in ruins here (10)
15. The responsibility is ours (4)
18. With only a penny the individual is finished (4)
19. Piece of agility which makes a sailor jump (10)
22. Practise culture among the lowly in prison (8)
24. In early March one elects a magistrate (6)
26. Join afterwards as a writer (9)
27. Call up all right in time (5)
28. Runs away from just reward (7)
29. Spring examination for a dignitary (7)

DOWN

1. Rotten liar men got out of the ground (7)
2. Try, perhaps, to contact the county (9)
3. Man's fear of a foreign country (8)
4. It is quiet when there is nothing loud in the street (4)
5. Stupid people obstruct leading masters (10)
6. Provide fresh illumination concerning holding a machine up (6)
7. Hidden to make the greyhound race (5)
8. The north speaks out for food-gatherers (7)
13. One of these people would make a mess of realities (10)
16. Someone local has to turn rough and be in (9)
17. Poles appear over the city in small numbers (8)
18. Had a go amateurishly when the expert was wounded (7)
20. Outside the north to catch a fish is well-bred (7)
21. Means of steering for a farmer (6)
23. They show passage of time also in seconds (5)
25. It provides transport for a penniless vagrant (4)

SETSQUARE

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is, in our appreciation of the so-called gourmet foods, a dismissal of the famous Forsterian maxim: 'Only connect.'

Around Perigord, you can buy postcards of a jolly farmer force-feeding a goose with a funnel down its throat. This is the traditional method of force-feeding. Starting at four months old, force-feeding lasts three to four weeks; the goose increases its weight by 61 per cent but the liver increases in weight by 371 per cent. Exercise is forbidden and, as the liver swells, breathing becomes difficult. It takes five hours to feed 60 geese in this manner, but technology has now stepped in and mechanised methods are used for the 2,000,000 geese force-fed in France today. The birds are put into a brace strapping their wings to their sides, an iron hook holds the head still and a funnel goes down the throat. A pusher packs the food in. Konran Lorez has described the process as 'torture to highly organised animals' and the *foie gras* industry as 'a shame to all Europe'. The making of *foie gras* is banned in the UK but not the importing of the product. Each goose is forced to eat six pounds of salted, fatty maize each day — the equivalent of a man consuming 28 pounds of spaghetti a day.

There seems to be little difference between goose liver or live carp, nor do I think it sentimental to loathe this aspect of gourmet food. Here I part company with colleagues like Anne Willan or La Varenne, who tells us that the *foie gras* must have delicate seasoning, slow cooking and always be pink in the centre; or Paul Levy, who feels he performed his culinary duty to his infant daughter by feeding her with a molecule of *foie gras*; or Christopher Driver, who refers to it as 'this globose pinquid miracle of unctuosity'. If we connect the food with its source and consider it in that context, then still choose to consume it, it is merely a matter of personal ethics; but to suppress knowledge of the source seems to me cowardly. □

Russell really did *not* request that you try to sell Eskimos *igloos*. For those, below, who know what a fridge is and weren't *altogether* unconvincing, eight pounds per head and a big hug for 1987.

I'm sorry, I don't think I heard you correctly. You mean to say that you keep your Seal Steakettes under a pile of snow! Madam, do you realise where that snow has been? There are nuclear submarines cruising underneath this ice and where do you think all those crews go to the toilet? Are you with me? It may look white and clean to you, Madam, but I think a microscope would tell a different story. Besides, think of the convenience. The kiddies come home from a game of cricket with a polar bear's testicle and they want a snack before *Mapp and Lucia* comes on. Just open the door and pull out a TV meal. You can say goodbye to fumbling in the snow for a piece of dead fish or whale fin. Isn't it time you gave yourself a break?

NICHOLAS MURRAY

Eskimos are great fellows but — have you noticed? — not one of you has been famous. Not one, ever, or you and I would know his name, wouldn't we? All nonentities. But now I've met up with you and I know *you're* not a nonentity. You're a somebody. But how do you prove it? It just so happens that I have a machine here, valuable, in perfect running order, very useful, lasts for ever, and the man who bought it — if he were by good luck an Eskimo — would be right there in the *Guinness Book of Records* in the time it takes you to sing 'Night and Day' . . . What do you say? That would take a year! You slay me!

PETER BROWN

A refrigerator is a heat-pump. It pumps heat from inside the cabinet to outside — cooling the inside and warming the outside. By the magic of thermodynamics, many watts of gorgeous, glowing heat can be captured for every watt of pumping power consumed. To use the DREADCO refrigerator as a heat-pump, simply build it into the wall of your igloo, facing outwards, and open the door. It will then effortlessly pump heat from the outside air into your igloo. Be warm and cosy at a fraction of the cost of conventional heating! Make the atmosphere colder for your envious neighbours! CAUTION: do not obstruct the cabinet of the DREADCO refrigerator with foodstuffs, etc., as this reduces pumping efficiency.

DAVID JONES

Titanic Digest Promotions

Dear **Mister Anuk**

Coming up to summer holidays soon? Does the thought of sweltering on those Newfoundland beaches leave you weak at the knees? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be able to cope with the heat on holiday?

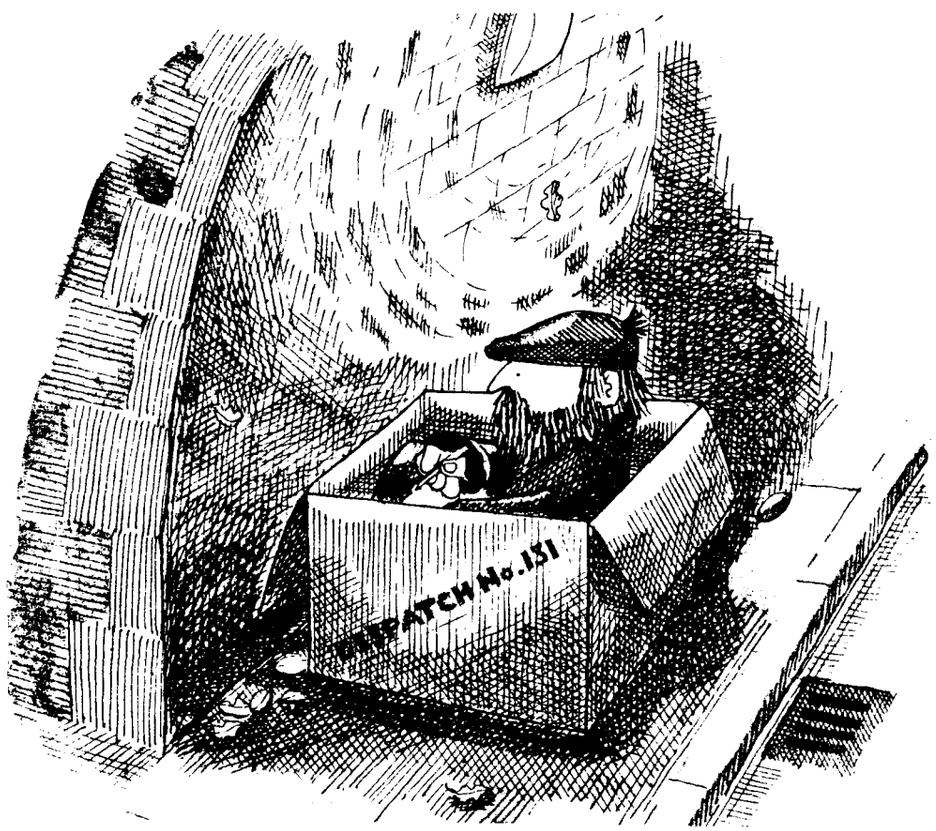
At last, Titanic have the answer — the new Acclimatisator mammoth refrigerator.

You alone, **Mister Anuk**, have been selected to receive a trial model Acclimatisator. Each week step inside a little longer, gradually turning the temperature up all the way to a balmy minus five and soon you will be ready to go on that dream holiday. Not only that, **Mister Anuk**, you can use the Acclimatisator as a food cupboard while you are away.

DAVID OLIVER

Very Vogue, these fridges. Like the one Fiona Richmond used to pose on. Suggest it to your wife — it would brighten your igloo faster than a flickering Aurora Borealis. And when you have a party no one will want to stir out of the kitchen — leaning on the fridge, sitting on it, opening the door to see what's inside. With this light, you see, all your food's lit up like Selfridge's windows. No more rummaging around with a whale-fat candle looking for the last salt cod. And, while the huskies keep pedalling, it costs nothing to run — *and* keeps the hounds of winter fit for spring. It'll give you a racing start next season!

D.A. PRINCE



"Reply, sending photograph, to box 131 . . ."

Weekend competition

No 2958 **Set by George Cowley**

A recent *NS* cartoon had the caption 'Opium is the religion of the people'. Could we have similar famous (mis)quotations? Max. five per entrant by 28 January.

No 2955 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Pitches for selling refrigerators to Eskimos.

Report **by Rosie Hughes**

Oh, my poor little lambkins: what a pother we've put you in! 'If you'll pardon my saying so, this deadline is ridiculous . . .' (Katie Mallett); 'Seriously, it's a bit rough . . .' (Will Bellenger); 'Did you *really* mean . . .' (Noel Petty); 'In haste, in case your deadline is serious . . .' (Gavin J.S. Ross). Well, my dears, I'm terribly sorry: it was all a case of Christmas confusion; this week (see above) we've managed to sort ourselves out. But none of it, I do have to add, can account for the *total patheticness* of your sales pitches to Eskimos. A very nice drawing, Jeremiah Sowerby; but, dearest Katie, 'if you'll pardon my saying so',

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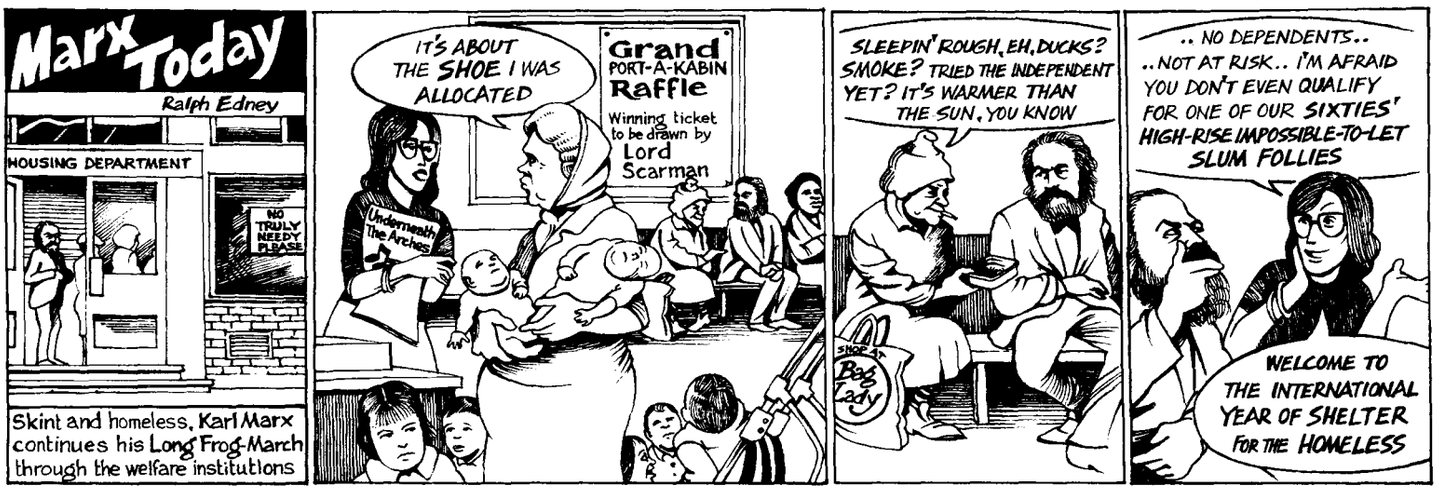
Marx Today
Ralph Edney
HOUSING DEPARTMENT
NO TRULY NEEDY PLEASE
Skint and homeless, Karl Marx continues his Long Frog-March through the welfare institutions
IT'S ABOUT THE SHOE I WAS ALLOCATED
Grand PORT-A-KABIN Raffle
Winning ticket to be drawn by Lord Scarman
Underneath the Arches
SLEEPIN' ROUGH, EH, DUCKS? SMOKE? TRIED THE INDEPENDENT YET? IT'S WARMER THAN THE SUN, YOU KNOW
SHORT-
Bag Lady
.. NO DEPENDENTS.. ..NOT AT RISK.. I'M AFRAID YOU DON'T EVEN QUALIFY FOR ONE OF OUR SIXTIES' HIGH-RISE IMPOSSIBLE-TO-LET SLUM FOLLIES
WELCOME TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

Chess

BY WINNING the play-off for the British championship Jon Speelman became the first player since the Penrose era to defend the title successfully. The Penrose era can be reckoned as ending in 1970. In the 12 previous years Jonathan Penrose had won the title no less than ten times. That is a record which will surely never be matched — and a good thing too, since that sort of one-man domination is only likely to occur when the competition is not too demanding. Excellent player that Penrose was, in retrospect the period of his supremacy seems like the dark ages of British chess, an impression that is confirmed by England's Olympiad results at the time (slipping from 11th place in 1958 to 25th place in 1970).

Speelman's rivals in the play-off were Chandler and Mestel, the three of them having tied on 8/11 at Southampton last August. If anyone had asked, I would have picked Murray Chandler as the likely victor. The choice could be justified by Murray's fine form at the Dubai Olympiad and was also influenced by some personal factors. There was an element of wishful thinking. Speelman and Mestel were both two-time winners, like myself, and we had a standing jc ke about our slow-motion race to number three. I don't mind losing the race, but I'll miss the joke.

Much more important was that Murray had never actually won the British and was determined to remedy the omission. Chandler is the dedicated professional. He always was, even when he first came over from New Zealand, having left school early, a chess-is-my-lifer with the willpower to make it more than a dream. It's impossible for Oxbridge graduates to commit themselves like that. They get the grandmaster title and still give the impression they are only playing to fill in time before they find their true vocation.

Speelman is a sort of reluctant professional, Mestel is an amateur by choice. It's significant that Jonathan Mestel has never written a chess book. His attitude to the game isn't even ambivalent. It accords pretty well with the view of chess expressed by another Chandler (Raymond) — 'as elaborate a waste of human intelligence as you could find anywhere outside an advertising agency'. I've learnt to steer away from this topic in his company for fear of running up against an awkward question: 'Well, what are we doing here, then?'. Jonathan always reminds me of Lasker — too broad an intellect to be asborbed by chess, easily bored with the details of opening theory, but a really tough practical player.

IT MIGHT SEEM that the amateur was put in his place in this play-off, since Mestel lost twice to both Chandler and Speelman. What really wrecked Mestel, however, was one dreadful blunder in the very first game against Chandler. After that he had nothing to lose but Elo points. Since the other two drew their mutual encounters, a two-way tie still remained. This was resolved in Speelman's favour when he won the second of two half-hour games.

Here I must object, on behalf of all those players who worked through five-hour sessions in the Kleinwort Grieveson British Championships in August, that this was not a fitting end to the contest. There is no question about Big Jon being worthy of the title. It's the manner, not the man, that is unsatisfactory. Resolving a tie in a national championship with quickplay games is as anti-climatic as a one-set final at Wimbledon.

Play-offs are a problem. If there were an ideal way to settle them you can be sure it would exhaust both time and sponsorship. At least quickplay games are preferable to tossing a coin, spinning a roulette wheel, or totting up opponents' scores. For want of a superior solution, I'm really grumbling to little purpose. Should we go for the first to win a game at ordinary time-limits? There might be a string of draws. And who gets the first bite with White? OK, end of grumble.

A letter from **Chris Arthur** of Brighton about the As-Souli position given in our Christmas double issue has left me with a puzzle about the puzzle. As Chris points out, if the hostile Firzans started the game at opposite ends of the same file they would move on opposite-coloured squares (like Bishops on c1 and c8 in the modern game). So how could a position with a Black Firzan on a1 and a White Firzan on c3 ever arise? Perhaps by promotion, though one would hardly promote to such a feeble piece as a Firzan out of choice. Perhaps the position was merely an artificial composition, rather than an endgame study in *shatranj*. But in that case it would indeed be a curiously artificial exercise.

Another possibility is that in *shatranj* the players had some choice in how they set up the pieces on their first rank at the beginning of the game, or at any rate that the Firzans did not start life facing each other along a file. Yet the Istanbul MS states that the Red Shah goes to 'the fourth square of his Firzan', which seems to be a way of describing the move . . . Kd5. But moves couldn't be described like that unless the Firzan had a standard initial square.

Can any other reader clear up this mystery?

George Botterill

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☐ Most of us in our modest smallholdings could undertake to produce a bottle of port of some kind for the unexpected visitor, to say nothing of the invited guest; if Lord Rosslyn's establishment could not do the same without sending out to the local pub it does not sound to be the sort of house one would have wished to spend much time in. — Letter in *Sunday Telegraph* (Mr J.T. Hart)

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